

CURRENT HISTORY

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THE MIDDLE EAST

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

The Clinton administration's handling of foreign affairs has come under attack for a variety of reasons: the administration doesn't have a foreign policy, or the policy it does have is inept, bumbling, impotent. A recent column by the *New York Times's* Thomas Friedman notes one of the latest attacks, by Professor Michael Mandelbaum, who finds that the administration is following "the standards of Mother Teresa" by turning foreign policy into a "branch of social work"; moreover, not only is it social work, it is incompetent social work, unwilling "to do whatever is necessary to keep (or make) peace."

There is a grain of truth to this argument, but to target the present administration as the source of this post-cold war missionary approach is historically myopic: after all, it was the Bush administration that regaled us with stories of Kuwaiti babies at the mercy of Iraqi Huns as one of the humanitarian reasons for the intervention in the Persian Gulf in 1990-1991. Furthermore, as this month's article on Iraq shows, the United States under both administrations has not done "whatever is necessary" in Iraq, an assertion with which the Iraqi people and the Kurds and Shiites in their "protected" zones would no doubt agree. This "out of sight, out of mind" approach can also be seen in Afghanistan, the multibillion-dollar cold war battlefield whose complex, "postwar" internal politics is ably examined by Tom Barfield.

Not following through (a distinctly un-Mother Teresa-like behavior) in Iraq or Afghanistan is perhaps indicative of America's generally passive public diplomacy in the Middle East, a thesis that Leon Hadar explores. But the Middle East still has the potential to push itself to the top of the agenda, as was seen with the Rabin assassination. We offer a first appraisal of the effects of the assassination on the Israeli polity, and an interview with a long-time observer of the Israeli religious right. The events since the assassination—Arafat's visit with Rabin's widow, the evacuation of West Bank towns ahead of schedule, and the renewed attempt to resolve the Golan impasse—make it clear that if Mother Teresa fits into global politics anywhere, it is in the cultivation of hope over despair.

COMMENTS ON THIS MONTH'S ISSUE?

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Five years after the end of the Persian Gulf War, "the United States and its allies [have] gained complete freedom of access to Persian Gulf oil resources, and a militarily powerful Israel, making peace with its Arab neighbors, [is] more secure than at any time in its history. The result has been the establishment of a Pax Americana in the Middle East. . . that finds the United States in the same position that Great Britain occupied after World War I, enjoying its Middle Eastern moment, in control and with no serious regional or global challengers."

America's Moment in the Middle East

LEON T. HADAR

Nothing better symbolizes the role of the United States in the new Middle East than the reports that mid-level United States officials helped negotiate the September 28, 1995, White House signing of the second self-rule accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization through the channels of "telephone diplomacy." Unlike the post-1973 Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, the United States played a marginal role in the 1995 talks; Washington was confined to resolving some of the technical problems and stage-managing the signing ceremony. Even the signing of this historic peace accord received limited coverage in the American media—the television networks were in the midst of their live coverage of the O. J. Simpson trial—suggesting that the Middle East had failed to produce the kind of television "copy" that now attracts the press to Bosnia. With Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic replacing Yasir Arafat as the man Americans love to hate, and with Bosnia's Muslims supplanting Israel's Jews as the West's beloved victims, the Middle East has become last year's soap opera, a television rerun garnering little audience share.

WHAT A DIFFERENCE THE END OF THE COLD WAR MAKES!

From Harry Truman to George Bush, American

presidents had been willing to defend what they perceived to be United States interests in the Middle East—containing the Soviet Union, protecting access to oil resources, and maintaining the security of Israel—by using American power and risking their own domestic political capital. The Truman Doctrine aimed to defend Western interests in the eastern Mediterranean and supported the establishment of a Jewish state. President Dwight Eisenhower used the 1956 Suez Crisis to erode British and French influence in the region and place the United States at the center of cold war strategy in the Middle East. Following the Six Day War in 1967, President Lyndon Johnson formed a strategic alliance with Israel directed against a pro-Soviet Arab alliance led by Egypt; President Richard Nixon took advantage of the 1973 October War to reestablish ties with Egypt and create the basis for an Israeli-Egyptian détente.

Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter continued to pursue the Egyptian-Israeli peace process, which led to the peace accord between Egypt and Israel and the creation of an informal strategic coalition that included Israel and the pro-American Arab states then facing a weakened Soviet Union and a hostile Iran. President Ronald Reagan tried to maintain that fragile coalition during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Iran-Iraq War.

Operation Desert Storm and the October 1991 Madrid peace conference permitted President Bush to take the first steps toward formalizing the pro-

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American Arab-Israeli alliance and bringing the PLO and Syria into that bloc. Under Bush the United States juggling act in the Middle East reached its successful finale: the Soviet Union was ejected from the region; the United States and its allies gained complete freedom of access to Persian Gulf oil resources; and a militarily powerful Israel, making peace with its Arab neighbors, was more secure than at any time in its history. The result has been the establishment of a Pax Americana in the Middle East; it is a regional extension of the "unipolar" international system that finds the United States in the same position that Great Britain occupied after World War I, enjoying its Middle Eastern moment, in control and with no serious regional or global challengers.

THE MIDDLE EAST AS A "NORMAL" PROBLEM

Reflecting the conventional wisdom about the emergence of a "unipolar international system," the United States Defense Department, in a 1991 draft policy paper, stated that Washington should "remain the predominant outside power [in the Middle East] and preserve United States and Western access to the region's oil." The United States would "seek to deter further aggression in the region, foster regional stability, protect United States nationals and property and safeguard our access to international airways and seaways."

While the Pentagon under Clinton has modified the unilateral approach reflected in the original draft and stressed the multilateral elements of its Middle East strategy, it continues to assume a leading role for the United States in forming regional military and diplomatic coalitions to deter future threats. The result has been the "dual containment" doctrine, developed by former Clinton Middle East aide and current United States Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk. The new doctrine states that Washington will attempt to keep Iran and Iraq weak through a combination of American military power and international diplomatic and economic sanctions; at the same time it will continue to be a "full partner" in the peace process and a strategic partner of Israel.

Previous presidents (Truman, Eisenhower, Nixon, and Carter) had proclaimed their doctrines aimed at containing Middle East challengers in public addresses before Congress. Clinton's Middle East doctrine was set forth by Indyk in a behind-

closed-doors address before a small group of experts in Washington in May 1993; in contrast, Clinton's vision of a new Pacific Community was stated by the president himself in Tokyo during a major trip to Asia later that year.

Indeed, with the geostrategic conflict between the old military superpowers giving way to geo-economic rivalry between the trade blocs, and with the Arab oil states transformed from economic powers threatening United States interests to military midgets dependent on United States might, President Clinton could begin reprioritizing American foreign policy, concluding that the Middle East does not require his urgent and personal attention. Washington's role could now be confined to serving as a military insurance agency and a diplomatic fire brigade—ensuring that Iran and Iraq are marginalized and safeguarding the peace process from potential Arab-Israeli tensions.

As it is "de-globalized" and "regionalized," the Middle East has become another "normal" United States foreign policy problem—and not a central one.

As it is "de-globalized" and "regionalized," the Middle East has become another "normal" United States foreign policy problem—and not a central one. At the same time the Arab-Israeli conflict has ceased to be at the center of Middle Eastern, much less world, politics. With the end of the superpower rivalry, the continuing disintegration of OPEC, and the severely reduced importance of Israel and the Arab world as strategic global players, the conflict has been confined to the more limited dimensions of a Palestinian-Israeli struggle over territory without the threat of a repetition of the October War and the resulting conflict between great powers, an oil embargo, or a major challenge to the existence of Israel.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has turned into another of the many "tribal" conflicts of the post-cold war era, not unlike the struggles between Azerbaijanis and Armenians or between Iraqi Arabs and Kurds, the consequences of which have had little direct impact on vital American interests. United States interest lies, therefore, in encouraging the localization of the Arab-Israeli conflict rather than providing incentives for its "reinternationalization." If anything, the sense of American benign neglect toward Arab-Israeli developments has been responsible for persuading Israelis and Arabs to move forward on the road to peace. It should not come as a surprise that the United States in 1995—50 years after the end of World War II and following four

decades of intensive American involvement in the Middle East—was satisfied to play the role of a cheering spectator in the agreement that brought about an end to more than 100 years of struggle between Jews and Arabs.

LOW-COST PAX AMERICANA?

The rhetoric suggesting continued commitment to maintaining a leadership position in the Arab-Israeli peace process notwithstanding, most Clinton administration actions have reflected the pressure to “localize” the issue, recognizing that it is no longer a top foreign policy priority requiring significant time and resources. Bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Arabs have remained on the diplomatic back burner, with only limited involvement on the part of President Clinton.

The administration did offer to contribute to an aid package for the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and to help Israel and Syria conclude a peace agreement. Nevertheless, the White House rejected Israeli and Arab requests that it accelerate the Syrian-Israeli peace process by launching Camp David-style negotiations involving the president. Instead, Secretary of State Warren Christopher occupied the role of Clinton's chief Middle East troubleshooter—trying, for example, to resolve the crises that resulted from Israel's deportation of 415 Palestinian Islamists to Lebanon in 1992 and the killing of Palestinians in Hebron by a Jewish religious extremist in 1994.

But this diplomatic activity aside, the policies pursued by Clinton have been directed at maintaining the status quo in the Middle East and marginalizing the Arab-Israeli peace process. The issue was brought to the top of the agenda only when it was recognized that dealing with it would entail minimum political costs for the president while providing him with some benefits.

The Clinton administration has attempted to focus its foreign policy on geoeconomics and the Pacific community and on minimizing military involvement in the old conflicts of the Ottoman Empire region and its periphery—including the Arab-Israeli conflict, Somalia, and the Balkans. The Clintonites have celebrated their aggressive “commercial diplomacy” with its focus on helping United States companies expand their investment and trade ties, especially in East Asia, and have stressed their commitment to managing relations with Japan and China. Hence, if history books will recall George Bush presiding over the Madrid peace conference as his finest diplomatic moment, Clin-

ton will probably be remembered for convening the Leaders Meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in Seattle in 1993.

Clinton's approach to Middle Eastern policy could be described as a “Bush-minus” approach, or the quest for a low-cost Pax Americana: trying to maintain the security of the pro-United States Arab states, America's domination of the Persian Gulf, and the evolving Arab-Israeli peace process without investing any major military and diplomatic resources.

The administration's dual containment doctrine has been based on such a low-cost strategy. After all, neither Iraq nor Iran is expected in the short or medium term to acquire the power to challenge United States hegemony in the region. Periodic displays of military and diplomatic force, such as the United States missile attack on Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Baghdad in June 1993, the continuing United States-led embargo against Saddam Hussein, and the efforts, including the May 1995 ban on United States trade with Iran to isolate Teheran, are expected to deter these two countries from making any aggressive moves against the other Arab-oil states.

Clinton's announcement of his decision to impose trade sanctions against Iran during a World Jewish Congress event and the Republican Congress's approval of his move (while calling for the tightening of the sanctions on Iran by punishing third parties who trade with it) reflect the political benefits gained by bashing Iran. At the same time, this strategy has produced only minimal costs in the form of some bickering with Japan and the European Union, who continue to trade with Iran, and with Russia and China, who had signed agreements with Baghdad to supply it with nuclear reactors and missile technology. Moreover, the administration has successfully resisted pressure from Russia and France to remove the UN embargo against the Iraqis.

The cost-effective aspect of the administration's Middle East strategy can be seen in its involvement in the Arab-Israeli talks, which were not expected to progress to the point where major United States engagement and presidential leadership would be needed. Sending diplomatic fire brigades to prevent potential crises from igniting and celebrating the finalization of Arab-Israeli negotiations in the form of televised ceremonies has helped produce the perception that Clinton remains “in charge” of the peace process.

Moreover, leading Republicans in Congress,

including Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms (R-S.C.), are opposed to foreign aid and multilateralist military engagements and sympathetic to the Israeli Likud Party's opposition to the peace process; they have expressed hostility to the proposal that the United States send troops to the Golan Heights to secure a peace accord between Syria and Israel. And despite pressure from Israel and its official lobby in Washington, they have also been reluctant to provide Jordan and the PNA with the economic aid promised by the Clinton administration, including the \$76 million it requested for the West Bank and Gaza for the 1996 fiscal year.

With growing skepticism in Congress and in some segments of the American Jewish community toward the Arab-Israeli talks, the message to Clinton is clear: there is no political constituency that would punish him for failing to energize the peace process; adopting a cautious approach would seem to fit with his domestic political interests, which can be preserved by maintaining the current level of United States aid to Israel, including continuing direct military and economic aid of more than \$3 billion annually—in addition to increased intelligence sharing and technology transfer. Despite strong support for slashing foreign aid on Capitol Hill, Israel's aid package has continued to enjoy strong bipartisan support, suggesting that, like Social Security, it has become an untouchable entitlement program whose value goes beyond United States foreign policy considerations and is measured by its domestic political significance.

Finally, the Clintonites have concluded that the secret agreements with the Persian Gulf oil states that commit the United States to come to their aid in case of attack is enough to help preserve their support for American hegemony in the region. Indeed, the possibility of another Desert Storm-like threat continues to drive United States military force structure planning. Currently, the United States has more than 20,000 military personnel in the Persian Gulf region.

On another level, Saudi Arabia, and to a lesser extent the other Arab oil states, could be said to have become part of the administration's "commercial diplomacy." In a deal that was widely seen as Saudi thanks for United States military action during the Gulf War, a \$7.5 billion aircraft deal between Saudia (the Saudi airline), Boeing, and McDonnell Douglas was announced in October 1995. In another move that showed Saudi Arabia's geoeconomic significance to Washington, the

Saudis awarded AT&T a \$4 billion contract to modernize the country's telecommunications system following an intense 16-month lobbying effort by White House and cabinet officials and a tough struggle with European, Japanese, and Canadian companies; it was the largest telecommunications contract outside the United States ever given to an American company.

Hence, without the cold war paradigm to set the agenda, American "national interest" in the world in general and in the Middle East in particular is being "domesticated," defined more and more in terms of the interests of the most powerful and skillful political players in Washington. It is not surprising that the Saudis, with their perceived financial power, and the Israelis, with their perceived political power, have become the main targets for Clinton's support. If the Saudis seem able to create jobs in key electoral states, the Israelis appear able to produce votes in the same states.

YES, BUT FOR HOW LONG?

Those trying to determine how long the United States will maintain its hegemony in the Middle East may recall that Great Britain's unilateral moment in that region lasted for almost half a century, from the end of World War I to the 1956 Suez War. While Russia is losing much of its influence in the region, Israel's and America's allies in the Arab world are moving toward peace and the formation of new modes of cooperation, and Iraq and Iran are sliding toward economic bankruptcy and military irrelevancy; American hegemony in the region looks more secure than ever.

Most experts predict that it is only a matter of time before Syria, enticed by the benefits of economic ties with the United States, joins the peace process. As officials in Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia suggest, it is not inconceivable that a post-Saddam Iraq, ruled by a pro-Western and "user-friendly" leader, could be co-opted into the pro-American camp. And as it enters into its postrevolutionary period of economic reconstruction and search for foreign investment, even Iran, despite all its anti-American rhetoric, may adopt a more pragmatic posture toward the United States.

That is at least how the proponents of the best-case scenario in Washington see it. But they are basing their forecasts on a static view of the current Middle Eastern reality, one that assumes a sense of continuity and inertia in developments in the region. That the "bad guys" would change their behavior or continue to suffer the consequences of

their anti-American mischief lends support to the thesis that the United States will be able to maintain for the foreseeable future its cost-free form of Pax Americana backed by the old Desert Storm club of regional allies (Israel and the Arab states), Western partners (the EU and Japan), and fellow travelers like Russia or China. At best the status quo will continue with a minimal investment of American resources. At worst the United States will lead another Desert-Storm-type operation to punish local aggressors and prove to potential global rivals that it remains the boss.

But things change—and the international system has been a continuing source of surprise to the proponents of the status quo perspective. In fact, with the collapse of the bipolar system, it looks as if we are moving toward a new world disorder in which power configurations reflecting political, military, and economic competitions among the three major trading blocs of North America, Europe, and Japan will intertwine with regional national, ethnic, and religious rivalries. The Middle East, particularly the oil-rich Gulf, could become a focal point for this struggle.

The vulnerability of Europe and Japan to the flow of oil from that area means that growing United States military and diplomatic power in the Middle East increases their economic insecurity. For example, Washington could be tempted at some point in the future to manipulate the supply of oil from the Middle East to Europe and Japan as a way of pressuring the EU to cut agricultural subsidies and trying to force Japan to open its markets to American products.

Certainly, if Congress and the president fail to reform the United States economy and prepare it for competition with Tokyo and Berlin, Washington would be tempted to use United States military power in the Middle East, the path of least political resistance, as part of the effort to win the geo-economic battle. After all, it seems easier for a United States president to win Congressional approval to send troops to the Gulf than to cut Social Security or Medicare.

But it is possible that if the costs of maintaining United States hegemony in the Middle East increase, the American public's support for that regional project would dramatically decline. While Egypt, America's leading strategic ally in the Arab world, is in the midst of a violent antigovernment Islamist insurgency, Saudi Arabia, Washington's economic and military partner in the Persian Gulf,

is suffering from growing economic and social problems that could lead to the collapse of its pro-American government. The disintegration of Iraq into Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish ministates, the prospects of a civil war in Syria following the death of President Hafiz el-Assad, and the division in Israel over the peace process, dramatized by the Rabin assassination, point to the fragility of the Pax Americana and suggest that in the future Washington may need more resources to manage it.

An increasingly isolationist American public may be even more reluctant to divert financial and military resources to the Middle East to launch a grand crusade against anti-American Islamic states. Clinton administration officials have stressed that their policy to isolate Iran is not rooted in any notion of replacing the cold war with a containment strategy against Iran. Nevertheless, continuing pressure from Israel and Egypt is forcing the administration to project a tougher posture against Islamic groups and governments. With the Republican Congress supporting a more assertive policy against Iran, a clash between the United States and the Islamic world has the potential of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

There is no doubt that in the post-cold war transition period the threats to American interests in the Middle East will be manageable while Europe and Japan will lack the necessary political-military means to challenge the United States. But as the domestic and regional policies of the Middle East begin to be transformed, as the military ties between Washington and its former Atlantic and Pacific allies change, as Europe and Japan move to translate their economic power into military influence, and as the memories of the Gulf War fade away, the idea of Washington serving as the Middle East policeman, with Europe and Japan paying to support this leading United States role, will be questioned by Europeans and Japanese as well as by Americans and Middle Easterners.

"We are in a transitional period," suggested former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger during a Congressional hearing on American policy in the Middle East. "I would think that over a period of 10 years, many of the security responsibilities that the United States is now shouldering in the Gulf ought to be carried by the Europeans who receive a larger share of their oil from the region." In short, when the next Gulf crisis comes, one should not expect Europe and Japan to follow the United States lead as was seen during Desert Storm. ■

"Rabin's assassination was not just the killing of an aging politician and the disruption of the political routine—his death seemed to end a period. Israelis could no longer ignore essential moral, spiritual, and practical questions about the nature of Israeli political culture."

Israel and the Rabin Assassination

GIDEON DORON

The murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on the eve of November 4, 1995, has rocked Israel socially and politically. Overnight, deeply rooted myths, assumptions, and beliefs were questioned. The prevailing political dictum that "A Jew does not kill a fellow Jew," which had evolved over centuries of diaspora communal life, dissipated. The political calculations of rulers and their opposition changed. A sense of uncertainty, even horror or panic, about personal safety and the stability of state institutions replaced sincere faith in the strength and ability of the democratic system. The enemy was no longer merely from without; the danger to one's personal security had now been generated at home. Hope gave way to despair, at least for the first two weeks, a period in which the dominant sound was the astonishing silence of thousands of (mostly young) mourners.

It seemed as if Rabin's assassination was not just the killing of an aging politician and the disruption of the political routine—his death seemed to end a period. Israelis could no longer ignore essential moral, spiritual, and practical questions about the nature of Israeli political culture: the inherent contradiction and permanent tension that exists between politics and religion within the "Jewish Democracy"; the essence of the so-called religious-national Zionism; the effectiveness of the security establishment, including the role of the police and the legendary secret service (General Security Service, or Shin Bet); the scope of and possible limitations on basic human rights such as the freedom of speech in a garrison state that had begun opening up to its formerly hostile environment. Suppressed

debates on the ability of citizens to tolerate each other in an ideologically divided polity, and their ability to adapt to rapid and fundamental policy changes, have also surfaced.

RABIN IN POWER

The June 1992 elections returned Labor to its traditional position as the country's largest centrist party and thus the one to be assigned the responsibility for forming and leading a coalition government. For Rabin the electoral victory marked his return to the posts of Labor Party chairman and prime minister after a 15-year absence.

For the first year Rabin's government relied on a narrow majority of 62 out of the 120 Knesset members. Three parties formed the governing coalition: Labor, the secular left-wing Meretz bloc, and the religious party Shas. The real and manipulated crises that frequently occurred between the ministers of Meretz and Shas were among the principal reasons for Shas's departure from the government in September 1993. To implement policies, to avoid an early election, or worse—to prevent the transfer of power to the largely unified opposition of nationalist and religious parties—Rabin had to rely during 1995 on a minority government aided by external parliamentary support of five MPs who were members of two parties that represent the Arab citizens of Israel. Additional support also came from the two-member Yahud faction, which had splintered from the right-wing Tzomet Party.

Even under normal conditions, relying on such a tentative base of support makes ruling an extremely difficult task. For Rabin the political obstacles seemed to be even harder; he could not command a majority within his own party or among the public. Moreover, several intraparty defeats signified the fact that, by and large, Shimon Peres, his foreign minister and the principal claimant for both posts held by Rabin, was still the major Labor Party power broker. The February

GIDEON DORON, a professor of political science at Tel Aviv University, is the chairman of the Israeli Association of Political Science and the chairman of the Board of the Second Authority for Television and Radio. His latest book, coauthored with Don Peretz, is *Government and Politics of Israel*, 3d ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1996). He served as a political strategist for the 1992 Rabin campaign.

1993 municipal elections and the outcomes of the mayoral race in Jerusalem constituted another political defeat for Labor, showing that its main opposition, Likud, was gradually resuming wide public appeal. By the summer of 1994, opinion polls consistently projected that in a head-to-head competition with Benjamin Netanyahu, the Likud leader, Rabin would most likely lose.

These political difficulties did not seem to affect Rabin's determination to make and implement policies whose impact would alter the essence of the Israeli polity. Domestically, following an electoral promise to "alter the order of national priorities," significantly greater funds were appropriated for education, transportation and communication infrastructures, the absorption of new immigrants, alleviation of unemployment, and creation of new jobs. At the same time, the Israeli economy performed remarkably well.

It was, however, Rabin's maneuvering on the international scene that captured world attention. Originally guided by a long-established strategic perspective, the prime minister planned to resolve the protracted conflict with Syria over the Golan Heights. But when negotiations with that country froze, Rabin decided, not without great reservations, to shift emphasis and address the Palestinian problem. The main force behind the 1993 Israel-PLO accord was his political foe-turned-partner Shimon Peres, who seemed to be pushing both Rabin and the ex-terrorist Yasir Arafat, the PLO chairman, toward a peaceful solution. The risk-averse Rabin agreed to a first-stage transfer to the Palestinian National Authority of the Gaza Strip and the city of Jericho. Then, in the second stage, which was initiated around the time of his death, several other West Bank cities were transferred to Palestinian rule. In the meantime a formal peace treaty was signed with Jordan in October 1994, and semiformal relations were established between Israel and other Arab countries, including Morocco and the Gulf States.

THE WRITINGS ON THE WALL

This summary of Rabin's activities underemphasizes the scope and intensity of opposition they generated in Israel. Many of the prime minister's military and personal friends were disappointed by his willingness to discuss the transfer of the Golan Heights to Syria in return for peace. A group of such former colleagues established a popular movement, The Third Way, to inform the public of what they believed to be the hazards of transferring

the Golan. Others, like Shas, were willing to politically support Rabin on some issues only in exchange for a promise to conduct a referendum before any government decision to turn over the Golan. The issue touched a public nerve: thousands of stickers and signs such as "The people are with the Golan" still decorate the Israeli landscape.

But opposition to transferring the Golan is secondary to the intensity and zeal generated over the West Bank—the territory captured by the Rabin-led Israeli army during the 1967 Six Day War. The main opposition to Rabin's policies came from the right-wing political camp. Continuous pressure was put on the government by this camp in public and political debates as well as in a series of no-confidence votes in the Knesset, in organizing public demonstrations, and in lobbying the international media, the American Congress, and major Jewish organizations. Periodic acts of Palestinian terrorism against the civilian Jewish population seemed to confirm the basic argument of the opposition that the Arabs and especially Arafat cannot and should not be trusted. While this opposition acted largely within the rules of the democratic game, some of its members did not.

These illegitimate and illegal acts of opposition were conducted by several groups of Jewish fundamentalists who explicitly rejected the right of the government to surrender parts of the "holy land" to the gentiles. For the fundamentalists, the land was promised by God to the people of Israel; therefore, no human being can defy their right to inherit it. The verdicts of their rabbis reigned over the decisions of the government. Accordingly, if someone is defined by their rabbis as a "*moser*" ("giver"—one who transfers Jewish lands to the gentiles), the believer has the right to take his life. One such believer, a law student at the religious Bar-Ilan University, did just that—he killed the prime minister.

THE POSTMORTEM POLITICAL EFFECTS

It has long been observed that the real danger to the stability of democratic systems is the unchecked activities of extraparliamentary groups whose main goal is to destroy the system. In the 1990s several such groups appeared in Israel on the extreme right, fueled by a mixture of ultranationalist and messianic beliefs. The narrow margin of formal political support upon which Rabin based his policies, the intensity of the legitimate opposition, and the inherent mistrust most Israelis feel toward the ultimate intentions of Arafat and Syria's President Hafez al-Assad, helped create a space that

"THE ENTIRE NATION WAS SHOCKED"

Current History asked Ehud Sprinzak, a professor of political science at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a specialist on the Israeli right, to comment on the connections between the religious right and the November 4, 1995, assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

What can you tell us about the Eyal terrorist group to which Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassin, Yigal Amir, is said to belong?

If you have read the newspapers, they have said that Amir belonged to an organized terrorist group—this is the wrong impression. It is clear that Amir was the center of his own group, which was working on some sort of conspiracy, but what you have to understand is the radical milieu in which people like Amir were thinking. The group itself is not important and indeed he probably does not belong to any organized group. He most likely functions in an unstructured system that cannot be understood in terms of the organized radical right terrorist groups.

Are similar groups active in Israel? Do you have any estimates of their membership numbers? Are they actually representative of a growing political force or are they simply an aberration?

Well, obviously they are a great cause for concern—just the fact that someone was able to assassinate the prime minister is cause for concern—but politically, they do not threaten Israeli democracy. The very serious activists probably only number a few hundred. They are not a political force to be reckoned with but they do present other threats.

At the end of your 1991 book, The Ascendancy of Israel's Radical Right, you argued that the possibility of civil war in Israel was slight. What is your assessment today?

More of the same. I do not really believe that civil war (that is, a major war in which 50 percent of the population is involved) is possible. The assassination alone does not point toward this. In fact, most of the Israeli right is very upset about Rabin's death—I would say civil war is out of the question.

It has been reported that 40 percent of the military belongs to the religious right. If this is true, what are the implications of their predominance for national security?

The Israeli army is not infected by the radical right, it is very loyal to the government. The entire command structure of the military reflects the wishes of the government and this reality is strengthened by the fact that all the men in the country undergo the same experiences with the army at the same time. There is no way that number is correct and there is no question of [the army's] loyalty to the government.

Will the government attempt to curb hate speech?

The situation is very confused right now. The assassination produced a sense of the delegitimization of

government. There has been an attempt by the attorney general to get anyone who utters even the slightest right-wing rhetoric. But I think that this initial reaction is more shock than anything else. Freedom of speech has been a major norm in Israel and it must and will remain so. Attempts at silencing the right will most likely taper off after the shock wears off.

What is your reaction to the charges that have been leveled against Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu and his party for allowing extremist rhetoric to go unchecked?

The Likud Party is obviously not responsible for the assassination. You must understand, though, the nature of the debate: up until the assassination, they were caught up in such vitriolic rhetoric that I think they are more guilty by default—by what they did not do. They are guilty of not having kicked out extremists from their rallies. If anything, Netanyahu and his party did not do enough to remove these people from their debate.

To what degree has the United States Jewish community supported and perhaps even strengthened the religious right in Israel?

It is interesting that you ask that question—I sense that there is an enormous amount of guilt among American Jews [who believe] that they are somehow responsible for the assassination. These Americans are not responsible. There is a connection between Israel and America and there is a flow of funds, and a fraction of this money may go toward violent groups, but most of it helps fund liberal organizations in Israel. Since the government announced it would not provide any funding for the settlements, fundraising in the United States for such settlements has increased but it is not exclusive. There are many liberal Jews in the United States who donate money for liberal causes. People have a tendency to believe in conspiracy theories. Once they see a flow of money, they immediately connect it to some sort of conspiracy, but I would stress that this money goes, for the most part, to other purposes: Yeshivas, community centers, etc. American leftists are raising this money too—it is not only the religious right in the United States.

How has the assassination changed the political climate in Israel?

The entire nation was shocked in a way it had never been shocked before; the impact on the country is unquestionable. People are definitely toning down their political expression in reaction to the assassination. It had been a vitriolic debate but people are more aware now of their responsibility for the situation and they are responding to the need to tone down what had been a boundary-less debate between the left and the right—they are indeed feeling the need to reconsider their words and the effects of those words. ■

This is an edited transcript of an interview conducted by Claudia Burke on November 16, 1995.

afforded a relatively high degree of freedom for these groups. So long as their aggression was directed toward the Palestinians, these groups were considered as perhaps illegal and immoral (that is, racist), but they were confined within a generally accepted quid pro quo that existed between Arabs and Jews in the framework of their protracted conflict. But when aggression was directed inward, this attitude had to be reexamined.

This reexamination is, however, not a simple matter. There is considerable confusion in Israel regarding the foundation on which Israeli society rests. For example, there is no separation between state and religion, or between politics and religion. The believer whose source of authority and truth is derived from God (or the rabbis) disregards choices made by the majority of his or her fellow citizens. Nevertheless, the same believer competes in politics over the distribution of power and for influence over the policymaking process.

Likewise, because there is no separation between religion and nationality in Israel—a state that is defined by the Zionist credo as “the National Home for the Jews”—there is little room for non-Jews (that is, Arabs—Muslim and Christian) in its corporate national identity. Hence, in this “Jewish democracy” a government that cannot command the approval of a majority of Jews and must rely on the support of the Arab politicians on matters defined as essentially Jewish, has been considered by some (including the president of the state) as not representing the will of the people. Rabin’s bold policy moves (and often his expressive manners) aggravated this issue. Some extremists accumulated arms to resolve this dilemma.

Could the government not have foreseen such developments? Two possible explanations suggest themselves. In the spirit of Alice, who could “see nobody on the road,” and the king, who wished to “have such eyes,” it is possible that the prevailing blindness is inherent in the perception of those Israelis who prefer to postpone as long as possible the need to resolve the contradiction between the religious and the political source of sovereignty. It is for this reason that Israel still does not have a constitution and politicians would rather muddle through from one crisis to another than establish religiously neutral ground for their polity. The support of the pivotal religious voters are dear to any ruling government.

Second, on more practical grounds, both the Labor and Likud governments are responsible for policies that encouraged Jewish settlements in the

occupied territories; both also have opposed the creation of an independent Palestinian state, and have tacitly accepted extremist activities. Over the years control over these fringe groups has weakened, allowing them to redirect their aggression inward, toward the system itself.

PERES IN CHARGE

The transition to the new government headed by Peres went smoothly because the usual right-wing opposition was not voiced. To maintain continuity and stability, Peres, the most senior politician after Rabin, chose to make only minor changes in the composition of his government. Like Rabin he assumed the post of prime minister and minister of defense, awarding his earlier post of foreign minister to the centrist former chief of staff, Ehud Barak, and the Interior Ministry to Haim Ramon, the young, popular general secretary of the Histadrut (Federation of Workers’ Unions). A new minister-without-portfolio, Rabbi Yehua Amital, was also nominated, presumably to signal religious voters that Labor is seeking a renewal of the so-called historical alliance with the national religious Zionists, an alliance that was established during the prestate era and lasted until the late 1970s.

This should be interpreted as an electoral move. Peres is a four-time loser in electoral races against Likud. To enhance his chances of capturing the prime ministership in the election to be held this fall—a race that would pit him directly against the Likud candidate—and to improve his party’s standing among the Israeli electorate, he must move to the center of voters’ preferences and develop new constituencies (like religious voters, new immigrants, and youth). This would mean that some policy modifications would have to be made (especially in the rapid pace of the peace process with the Palestinians and the Syrians), or, alternatively, the process would have to be accelerated so that come election day voters would have to formulate their preferences in light of the new reality. The risk-taker Peres would most likely prefer the second option, but political reality and the burden of the two new posts would most likely guide him toward the first. In such a case he would adopt a risk-averse political pattern similar to that previously established by Rabin. However, in a polity where winners and losers are determined by small marginal shifts of voters among political camps, it is of course difficult to project at the beginning of 1996 who will rule Israel at the end of the year. ■

"Reports of Saddam Hussein's impending demise may turn out to be greatly exaggerated. Saddam has not yet run out of lives and continues to show an ability to retain power in the face of circumstances that would have doomed most rulers."

Iraq: Fin de Regime?

AHMED HASHIM

Five years after the end of the Persian Gulf War, Iraq under Saddam Hussein is still in the grips of one of the most prolonged and painful traumas it has experienced since its emergence as a national state in 1921. The country remains locked in conflict with Western states, some of which are irritated with Saddam's continued survival, and with the United Nations Security Council, primarily over compliance with Iraq's obligation to terminate its weapons of mass destruction programs. Saddam Hussein, however, does not seem as well entrenched in power as was evident only two years ago. The weakness of the regime's power base has been increasingly exposed by deteriorating socioeconomic conditions. Government rule does not extend to the Kurdish-dominated far north, while its authority in the Shiite south is tenuous at best. More ominously, Saddam is facing serious trouble in the Sunni Arab heartland and within his own ruling "Royal Family."

STILL NOT IN COMPLIANCE

Iraq's confrontation with the West and the United Nations has two major aspects: Saddam's continued rule and the deliberately slow pace with which Iraq implements the post-Gulf War UN resolutions, especially those mandating the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction and the long-term monitoring of its military-industrial base.

Iraq's crushing defeat in the war and the large-scale insurrections that followed in March 1991 failed to topple Saddam. Nor did the military, humiliated by the defeat and aware of the extensive damage done to Iraq because of the Kuwait

misadventure, succeed in mounting a coup as members of the Gulf War coalition had hoped. To the consternation of the coalition, Saddam not only surmounted his humiliating defeat, he also suppressed two rebellions and continues to remain in power despite severe sanctions. The sanctions, implemented in August 1990 after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, ended Iraq's trade with the outside world, including the export of oil, its main source of revenue, but they failed to get Saddam out of Kuwait; at the war's end the coalition decided to maintain them to get the Iraqi ruler out of Iraq. The economic embargo was to be supplemented by other instruments.

Mindful of its failure to remove Saddam and well aware of the adverse impact this might have on George Bush's chances in the November 1992 presidential elections, the Bush administration opted to maintain "excruciating pressure" on Saddam's regime by the constant threat of renewed military action, continuation of diplomatic and political pressure to keep Iraq isolated internationally, and the possibility of covert activities to destabilize the ruling regime. Bush had painted himself into a corner with his insistence that Saddam must go before sanctions were lifted, and it mattered to him not one whit if Saddam were replaced by a Saddam look-alike, down to the burly mustache. Nonetheless, Bush lost the election to his Democratic Party adversary, Bill Clinton.

Iraq hoped that the Clinton administration would "depersonalize" the conflict and move toward better relations. Not only did the new administration fail to do that: it also showed a virulent ideological hostility toward Baghdad that was unmatched by the previous administration. This was reflected in its policy of "dual containment," which was directed against both Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Declaring Saddam's regime "irredeemable" and

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a threat to United States allies and friends in the region, dual containment, in the case of Iraq, meant continuing sanctions until the Saddam regime fell from power; it also meant that the United States would seek to establish close relations with the Iraqi opposition, and it meant that Baghdad would have to comply with the UN Security Council resolutions, including those relating to missing Kuwaiti persons, return of Kuwaiti property, renunciation of terrorism, ending repression of its population and human rights abuses throughout the country, and cooperation with international relief organizations. Last but not least, Iraq must convince the world of its "peaceful intentions." It rapidly became clear that these stringent requirements could not be fulfilled—or more accurately, that the United States would not allow Iraq to fulfill them—without the regime falling from power (for example, the United States could define "peaceful intentions" any way it liked, making it impossible for Iraq to fulfill that condition).

Sanctions were also used to try to delegitimize the regime under the guise of expressing humanitarian concern for the Iraqi people. Iraq has considerably annoyed the UN and Western powers by not accepting UN Resolution 706 (August 1991), which would allow it to sell \$1.6-billion-worth of oil over a six-month period. The revenue from the limited oil sale would be put into an escrow account controlled by the UN. Part of the revenue would pay for UN activities in Iraq, in particular the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction, while the bulk of the proceeds would be used to purchase food and medicines to be distributed under UN auspices. Iraq dismissed the resolution as an arrogation of its national sovereignty—as if the country were not already a *de facto* UN mandated territory (Baghdad has allowed the UN to distribute basic foods and necessities to Iraq's population). It is thus not surprising that Iraq rejected out of hand a similar resolution in April 1995 that would have allowed it to sell more oil to purchase essential goods.

PLAYING CAT AND MOUSE

Sanctions are also being used to ensure Iraqi compliance with UN Resolution 687 (April 1991). This has not been easy. For Iraq, these programs constitute a truly heroic and impressive achievement that the regime has sought to save at all costs, despite its obligation as a defeated party to accept the terms of Resolution 687. Iraq's postwar

relations with the international community have been dominated by conflicts over its persistent attempts to circumvent the obligations imposed by Resolution 687 that it disclose the full extent of its weapons of mass destruction programs in the areas of chemical, nuclear, and biological weapons and ballistic missiles, and that it should then dismantle these programs. Theoretically, only after these two tasks were completed would the easing or lifting of sanctions be considered.

In February 1992 the Security Council condemned Iraq's reluctance to implement Resolutions 707 and 715, which were concerned with the long-term monitoring of weapons of mass destruction and the eradication of Iraq's capability to manufacture such weapons. Iraq claimed that it had the right to modify military equipment and facilities for peaceful purposes. The Security Council, led by the United States and Britain, warned Iraq of grave consequences if it continued to violate its obligations. Iraq ultimately backed down and in November 1993 allowed the installation of the most intrusive inspection and monitoring mechanism ever devised to keep abreast of a defeated nation's residual war production capacity.

Yet controversy was never absent. Despite acknowledging Iraqi cooperation with setting up the monitoring mechanism, from September 1994, Rolf Ekeus, the head of the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) overseeing implementation of Resolutions 707 and 715, continued to question the completeness and veracity of Iraqi responses to UNSCOM requests for more detailed information on all its weapons of mass destruction programs, especially the biological program, about which there was insufficient data. Iraq's efforts to hide the extent of this particular program came apart in the wake of the August 1995 defection of Hussein Kamel al-Majid, Saddam's son-in-law and cousin and the man chiefly responsible for the construction and administration of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs. In a state of political panic, and fearful that Kamel would disclose deeper secrets, Baghdad hastily revealed the extent of its biological arsenal, its concealment of chemical warhead flight tests, and a crash effort to deploy a nuclear device by 1990.

The focus of attention, however, remained the biological weapons program. The international community was stunned by the wide range and sophistication of the Iraqi research in these weapons. Ekeus noted that Iraq had proceeded far enough in this area to have given focused thought

to a "doctrine of operational use." These revelations considerably diminished the chances of an erosion of the sanctions regime in the near future. Iraq's supporters in the Security Council were embarrassed and silenced while its detractors, primarily the United States and Britain, reacted with glee and self-congratulatory comments about the untrustworthiness of the Saddam regime and the predictable statement that the sanctions must remain in place.

Iraq, of course, has been searching for a way to break the economic sanctions. It has tried to capitalize on the growing divisions in the international community over the question of whether sanctions should continue. Many Arab and Islamic states are becoming increasingly resentful of the perceived Anglo-American use of the UN Security Council as an instrument to impose a "particularistic agenda." But Iraqis, especially veteran diplomats like Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, realize that their diplomatic efforts should be focused on the real power brokers within the UN, among whom differences were becoming apparent even by late 1993. Russia, China, and France are increasingly resentful of American and British use of the sanctions to continue pressure on Iraq until Saddam falls from power. Hoping to rebuild their lucrative political and economic relations with Iraq and unable to understand the American concept of Iraq as a "rogue" state, these three countries insist that the Security Council should acknowledge the increase in Iraqi cooperation with the UN arms inspectors and that it should ultimately be rewarded for that by easing or lifting sanctions.

CRUELTY AND SILENCE

In the fall of 1993, the minister of trade calculated that three years of sanctions had cost Iraq an estimated \$60 billion in lost oil revenues. The euphoric reconstruction drive Iraq engaged in immediately after the end of the war slowed considerably in late 1992 and finally sputtered out in 1993. Isolated, without access to spare parts, raw materials, industrial goods, and foreign technical expertise, Iraq has reached the limit of what it can repair and rebuild through sheer determination, improvisation, native ingenuity, and cannibalization.

The Iraqi middle class has ceased to exist as a coherent socioeconomic strata; having sold off their household goods or properties, members of the middle class have joined the ranks of the masses who rely on the state for basic needs. The lucky ones, after paying an onerous departure tax,

have migrated overseas, bringing about a serious "brain drain" of talent and wiping out decades of investment in human capital. Especially hard hit has been that part of the middle class composed of public-sector employees, who now make between 5,000 and 15,000 dinars monthly, which comes out to between \$2.50 and \$7.50 at the official exchange rate or between \$11 and \$33 at the black market rate. Conceding that this state of affairs is untenable, the government has started to allow public-sector employees to seek second jobs in order to slow the deterioration in their standard of living.

Social services, health care, and education have witnessed a precipitous decline in quality. The incidence of potentially fatal diseases has risen dramatically for children and those over the age of 50. A large percentage of Iraq's young will reach maturity suffering from retardation, stunted growth, and a host of serious diseases associated with malnutrition. In May 1995 the United Nations reported that almost 25 percent of Iraqi children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition. The situation is worst in areas where Baghdad's authority is nonexistent or tenuous at best. A UN mission in March 1993 noted that almost half the 2.2 million people living in the UN-protected Kurdistan zone were suffering from malnutrition and other diseases, while in the Shiite south hundreds of thousands were at risk of water-borne diseases because of the almost complete collapse of the sewage system.

The government's ability to relieve pressure on the Iraqi population and stabilize socioeconomic conditions has diminished considerably in the past two years. The government has often been forced to cut back on rations because of the growing problems of distribution and diminishing resources (a recent UN report says Iraqis receive only 1,000 calories a day, down from a daily caloric intake of 3,000 five years ago). More insidiously, Baghdad closely controls the stockpile of food and increases or decreases rations as a form of political maneuvering and to show the people who is in control. Agriculture has not fared well either. The summer harvest in 1991 was poor despite a 50 percent increase in acreage planted. Harvests since then have been uniformly poor and the agricultural infrastructure has not recovered from lack of fertilizer, animal feed, spare parts for machinery, and war damage to irrigation and drainage.

The social fabric has begun to unravel. The Iraqi looting and brutalization of Kuwait, so vividly and

eloquently described in Kanan Makiya's *Cruelty and Silence*, has become a metaphor for what is happening in Iraq itself. Corruption and bribery are rampant in a government that once prided itself on being one of the least corrupt in the Middle East. The regime's ruling elite, seeking to monopolize commerce in a sanction-bound economy, steals from the people while the people steal from each other, all of which has contributed to a spiraling crime rate to which the forces of law and order are indifferent or are in partnership with the criminals. Many women—orphans, war widows, and those with families to feed—have become prostitutes while several thousand demobilized soldiers with no skills save that of soldiering have turned to banditry in rural areas. In short, for the past five years, the differentiation between social classes along economic lines has become meaningless as Iraq has progressively become a society akin to a traditional third world one in which there is a huge gap between a tiny privileged strata, made up mostly of the ruling elite and the rich traders and merchants who have become wealthy as a result of the sanctions.

THE KURDS

The opposition in exile underestimated Saddam's staying power and was stunned by the effectiveness with which the regime crushed the March 1991 insurrections. While determined not to remain bystanders to the post-Gulf War drama being played out inside Iraq, the opposition has been only marginally successful in projecting itself as an alternative to Saddam Hussein. For one, the opposition lacks cohesion. This could be seen at the June 1992 meeting in Vienna, which saw the emergence of an umbrella group, the Iraqi National Council (INC), that ostensibly united a number of opposition organizations. Yet Islamist, Arab nationalist, and leftist groups—a substantial and important constituency—stayed away from the Vienna conference. These groups accused the conference sponsors—the two Kurdish parties, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), around whom had adhered a motley crew of Western-based and -backed insignificant Iraqi Arab exiles—of not coordinating with or consulting them. Furthermore, they were highly suspicious of the Kurdish parties' agenda. The suspicion also grew that the sole qualification of INC was that it was attuned to Western interests and designs for Iraq.

INC, for example, advocates the continuation of sanctions on Iraq, hardly a position calculated to endear it to the Iraqi people.

Opposition groups are united on one issue: the overthrow of Saddam, but they are not perceived as having credible plans to do so. Nor are they seen as having a practical agenda for the post-Saddam era. Last, but not least, many Iraqis question the exiles' integrity and political maturity, seeing them as paid agents of Western or Arab intelligence services and governments. For a country with a nationalism as prickly as that of the Iraqis, this is a great failing.

What is important is what is happening in Iraq itself in the Kurdish north and the Shiite south. The dismal situation in both areas belies the optimism of the exiled opposition groups that they can act as springboards for a concerted assault into the heart of Iraq. This is most apparent in "Iraqi Kurdistan."

Following the failure of autonomy talks with the KDP and PUK, Baghdad implemented a blockade against the Kurdish north in October 1991 by constructing a 350-mile-long militarized line that cut off Kurdistan from the rest of the country. The new line was fortified with tanks, artillery, infantry, and extensive minefields. Iraq then prevented even the smallest quantities of food and fuel from entering the blockaded north.

Why did Saddam do this? He wanted to show both the Kurds and outside powers that Baghdad could not be discounted when it came to the Iraqi north, and that it held cards of its own. The paradox is that Saddam, who opposes Kurdish independence or autonomy (beyond what he is willing to grant), removed Baghdad's authority in order to occupy a better position when he regained control. The emergence of Kurdistan's de facto autonomy forced the Kurds to set up their own administrative and legislative organs to avoid chaos and a further decline in public security. But the Kurdish experiment in freedom has revealed deep-seated differences and splits within the Kurdish movement and attracted the intervention of their Turkish and Iranian neighbors.

The problems facing the Kurds are many. First, there is an intense rivalry between the KDP, led by Massoud Barzani, and the PUK, led by Jalal Talibani. When the May 1992 elections failed to give the Kurds a leader with a decisive majority, Barzani

*As one senior
Baathist official
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like waiting for
Godot to arrive."*

and Talibani settled on a 50-50 power-sharing formula, even though Barzani's KDP had come out ahead by a slight majority. Second, although they are the largest and most powerful Kurdish groups, the KDP and the PUK are not totally representative of all Kurds, which has complicated the political situation in Iraqi Kurdistan. Third, Kurdistan is in economic shambles; it is shut off from the rest of Iraq and without any viable commercial or financial infrastructure. The only source of revenue is import/export customs duties imposed on goods coming from Turkey on their way south to Mosul and the rest of the country or on Iraqi oil smuggled out through KDP-controlled territory. Fourth, instability in the enclave has been intensified by the security concerns of Iraq's Iranian and Turkish neighbors.

By late 1995 the situation in Kurdistan verged on anarchy. A massive Turkish incursion into northern Iraq failed to silence the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) after the guerrilla group had begun to use Iraqi Kurdistan as a staging area for attacks on Turkey. At the same time, fierce clashes took place between the PKK and the Iraqi Kurds (the latter attempting to maintain good relations with Turkey), and between the KDP and the PUK. An attempt by a worried United States to restore a semblance of normality to the enclave to prevent Saddam or the Iranians from taking advantage of the situation failed. The United States tried to persuade the KDP and PUK to pledge an end to the internecine conflict, to establish a permanent cease-fire, and to resolve all their bilateral differences. But by October-November 1995, clashes between the PUK and KDP were matched by a vitriolic war of words, heightened by PUK accusations that the KDP received arms from Baghdad in order to tilt the military balance of power in favor of the KDP. Clearly, the suspicions between these two largest Kurdish factions have not dissipated and Iraqi Kurdistan's socioeconomic situation and stability show no sign of improvement. The euphoria of 1992, when the Kurds engaged in free and democratic elections, has given way to despair and a desire on the part of young Kurds to escape from Kurdistan.

WAITING FOR SADDAM

As Iraq finishes its fifth year under increasingly onerous sanctions, analysts and governments mesmerized by the tantalizing possibility that change may be afoot in Iraq are debating the future of the country. Implicit in this debate is this question: Is

Saddam on his way out, or is he solidly entrenched in power?

Curiously, Saddam's continued reign is often ignored when the future of Iraq is discussed. Most observers have tended to focus on change, and change in the context of Iraqi domestic politics is inextricably linked in the minds of most people with the disappearance of Saddam from the Iraqi political scene. But what if Saddam does not disappear? This is an eminently plausible scenario. Although his demise has often been predicted, it is also the case that, as one senior Baathist official put it, "Waiting for Saddam to go is like waiting for Godot to arrive"—in other words, Saddam will never leave because of outside pressure.

Saddam Hussein has achieved an unprecedented concentration of power and has created a nearly unprecedented personality cult. But Saddam cannot rule alone. He has wielded control over a vast formal state apparatus and over an equally vast but informal network of power based on kinship ties with Sunni Arabs in central Iraq, on longstanding friendships with Baathist fellow travelers, and most important of all, on his immediate family: the wider Takriti clan to which he belongs, and his tribe, the al-Bunasser. There have been serious cracks in a number of these key institutions or centers of power. Most ominously, the regime has witnessed growing dissatisfaction among the major Sunni Arab tribes—the Juburis, Duris, and Dulaim—that had not rebelled against the regime in 1991. Yet it is dissent within the Takriti ruling clan that has struck closest to Saddam.

Between the 1970s and 1980s the Takritis had been an important base of support for the regime. The early 1990s, however, had seen an important development: the dramatic growth in the power of Saddam Hussein's family as it came to control all key state institutions. The family had also become extremely wealthy.

Saddam's ability to grant or withhold favors and positions encourages family rivalry and rifts. The Iraqi ruler has become adept at balancing the ambitions and greed of his clan, alternately promoting and punishing or removing them from positions of power. The defection of Hussein Kamel in August created a tremendous sense of optimism in Western circles that the end was near for Saddam and that therefore sanctions must be kept in place. But the euphoria over Kamel's defection and the belief that he could form the focus of opposition to Saddam rapidly evaporated by September.

First, some analysts have concluded that Kamel's motivation for defecting had less to do with a belief on his part that the regime was on the verge of collapse and more to do with a concern for his own personal safety and that of his wife, brother, and sister-in-law, which was being jeopardized by Saddam's increasingly unstable son, Uday. Second, all Iraqis are united in their view that Kamel is not a viable alternative for Iraq. He betrayed Iraq at a difficult moment in its existence and, for the people and the opposition, he is a brutal individual who played a significant role in the state's repressive activities. Third, Kamel has been dismissed as unimportant to the future of Iraq by other regional states. Damascus and Teheran are alarmed by the prospect that a political bouleversement in Baghdad would be followed by the installation of a pro-American regime. Not long after Kamel's defection it became clear that he did not have much of a standing in Baghdad and that he could not be America's man in Baghdad.

The Iraqi leader has shown extraordinary resilience. Saddam, the master conspirator, has so far been able to outwit those who might wish to unseat him. He is one of the few modern leaders whose entire political career before becoming president focused exclusively on matters of intelligence and security. This has given him an almost uncanny ability to detect and swiftly nip in the bud any threats to regime security. Moreover, Saddam has single-mindedly practiced Mao Zedong's famous maxim that "People are not chives; when you cut off their heads they do not grow new ones." He has neutralized opponents and rivals by the simple expedient of killing them, in stark con-

trast to previous Iraqi regimes, which allowed their opponents to live or to go into exile and then come back and haunt them.

Saddam continued to show that he is still in charge by having the Iraqi people vote in an October 15, 1995, referendum on whether he should remain president for another seven years. The government "predicted" that Iraq's voters would fully support Saddam's continuation as president (99.96 percent did—the other .04 percent were obviously tired of living). Although the referendum was hardly a paragon of democratic politics, the information minister, Yusuf Hammadi, stated that while Iraq will not be a Western-style "liberal democracy," the postreferendum era will be one of political freedom with opposition parties and a free press allowed, and the creation of an upper legislative body will be considered. Saddam also reportedly moved to dilute the power of his immediate circle of relatives, particularly of Uday, whose bully-boy tactics and brutality have alienated and harmed military members of the Takriti ruling elite. In this context, Saddam may move to widen his ruling circle by rehabilitating the almost moribund Baath party and put more technocrats into important decision-making functions.

Reports of Saddam Hussein's impending demise may turn out to be greatly exaggerated. Saddam has not yet run out of lives and continues to show an ability to retain power in the face of circumstances that would have doomed most rulers, this time by engaging in a process of political restructuring that, irrespective of whether it is genuine or not, seems to be a Saddam trademark whenever he feels pressure. ■

The November car bombing by Islamic militants in Riyadh that killed six people—five of them Americans—surprised those who had thought that the Saudis were immune to fundamentalist terrorism. But as Madawi al-Rasheed shows in her article, the Saudi state has been grappling with a nonviolent fundamentalist opposition since the end of the Persian Gulf War. Whether this opposition will join forces with those that carried out the Riyadh bombing remains to be seen.

Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition

MADAWI AL-RASHEED

"Khomeini's was a cassette revolution, ours will be a fax revolution."

These are the words of Saad al-Faqih, director of the London-based Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights in Saudi Arabia, one of the Saudi Islamist opposition organizations in exile. The CDLR's use of electronic communication such as the fax machine continues to attract the attention of the international media and the Saudi state. It is claimed that Faqih and Muhammad al-Masari, the CDLR spokesman, send 800 faxes to Saudi Arabia and 200 others to embassies and press centers every Tuesday. It seems that these faxes remain beyond the control of the state. The faxes transmit the committee's weekly communiqués, which include reports on events in the country ranging from human rights abuses and arrests to corruption in the royal family. Most important, these communiqués, together with other reports and occasional leaflets, inform the Saudis who receive them about the committee's program and agenda for change and reform.

So far the Islamist opposition in Saudi Arabia has precipitated an atmosphere of instability in a state that has been considered immune to the various manifestations of political Islam that have arisen in other Arab countries. What is most important about the Saudi phenomenon is the strengthening of the Islamic opposition in a state regarded to be in compliance with the rules of the sharia, or Islamic law. While Islamic groups in other Arab countries struggle against secular

states that confine the sharia to the private sphere of marriage, divorce, and inheritance, the Saudi state claims to apply Islam in all spheres of politics and government. This makes the rise of an Islamic opposition in Saudi Arabia all the more intriguing.

THE OPPOSITION'S GENESIS

Who are the Islamists in Saudi Arabia? The question is not easy to answer in a country that bans political parties, free assembly, public discussions, or criticism of the political status quo. However, the past five years have been characterized by an unprecedented atmosphere of *infatah* (openness). This atmosphere has led to public debates on major issues relating to the country's government and future. It is the mosque and the religious universities where such debates have mainly taken place, and the results have been manifested through the circulation of pamphlets, taped Friday sermons, and petitions and faxes to the king. Such open political activities have previously been unknown in Saudi Arabia.

An example of these activities is the petition to the king circulated in February 1991 that was signed by 52 members of the religious establishment. This petition was also signed by the head of the ulama (religious scholars), Sheikh Abd al-Aziz bin Baz (Ibn Baz), and judges, university professors, and preachers. Its 12 points focused on the reiteration of the status of sharia law as the guiding principle of all aspects of government. The aim of the petitioners "was to change the fundamentals of the relationship between 'state and church' and establish in Saudi Arabia an 'Islamic government' resembling, to some extent, Tehran's Shiite Islamic regime modeled upon Ayatollah

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Khomayni's principle of *vilayet e faqih* (the rule of the theologian)."¹

This petition was followed in September 1992 by an important 45-page document, "The Memorandum of Advice," signed by over 100 ulama and addressed to Ibn Baz. R. Hrair Dekmejian's analysis of the document emphasizes its tone, which in his opinion advanced a set of radical and defiant demands. These included the removal of all government restrictions on Islamic clerics, scholars, and teachers; the participation of the ulama in the work of all government agencies, ministries, and embassies; and the establishment of a supreme religious constitutional court to review and purify all laws and assure their compatibility with Islam. Other demands focused on the censorship of foreign journals, the support of Muslim causes, reforming the judicial system, restricting the powers of the police, and strengthening the army.²

ISLAMISTS: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

While these petitions represented the climax of an existing discontent in the religious establishment over the government's actions, especially during the Gulf crisis, the Islamic opposition that followed the war seems to emanate from two sources. One is a group of Wahhabi ulama and *faqihs* (religious jurists) who use mosques and lecture halls to voice their discontent. These are trainees of the Islamic universities founded by the state in the last three decades. The establishment of such universities as centers of religious learning was not a response to an increasing local need for religious knowledge and skills. They were instead part of state policy during the reign of King Faisal, who wanted to establish Saudi Arabia as a country leading the Islamic world. Saudi graduates of these universities were often sent abroad to preach and establish Islamic centers and schools if they could not be absorbed internally in the administration or the religious establishment.

The leading figures in this opposition have been two clerics from the Nejd region, Sheikh Safar al-Hawali and Sheikh Salman al-Audah. The trend they represent is often referred to as "neofundamentalist" or "nonconformist" ulama. These new, relatively young personalities tend to deviate from their predecessors among the dominant Wahhabi

ulama in that they express opinions on issues beyond theology, morality, and proper Islamic conduct. Their regular Friday sermons include their views on internal politics and international and regional affairs. Since the Gulf War, the invitation of foreign troops to Saudi Arabia, the peace process with Israel, the legitimacy of the house of Saud itself, and the building of a strong Islamic army in the country have become regular concerns in their statements.

The activities of the more militant members of this opposition have been coordinated by a society called the Islamic Resurgence. The influence of the Islamic revolution in Iran on this group is transparent in its adoption of the concept of *vilayat al-faqih*; the group's objective is to create in Saudi Arabia a modern puritanical theocracy, inspired by the teachings of Wahhabism. Its criticism of the government centers on moral laxity and corruption among the ruling group. The most outspoken figures of this genre of Islamists—Sheikhs Hawali and Audah—have been arrested, but their supporters continue to attack the government through faxes to the king and clandestine tapes that criticize members of the royal family and its corruption.

In general, Islamists in Saudi Arabia seem to be drawn from a nontribal, urban middle-class background. Dekmejian argues that many of the Islamists who signed the two petitions were men of religion, predominantly from Nejd—the cradle of Wahhabism and the traditional power base of the Saudi monarchy. While some members of this opposition continue to operate in the country, the tightening of government control and successive campaigns of arrest led to the formation of an Islamic opposition in exile. This represents the second category of Islamists, currently operating from London. Here I refer to the CDLR and its sister organization, the Committee for Advice and Reform (CAR), led by Usama bin Laden.

The CDLR was initially established in Riyadh in May 1993 by six Saudis who included in their ranks lawyers, poets, and intellectuals. Muhammad al-Masari, one of the founders, was arrested and later released. He left Saudi Arabia with a number of supporters and arrived in London in April 1994, where he established the CDLR's headquarters. Masari asked for political asylum but Britain, worried about its economic relations with Saudi Arabia, did not grant him asylum and asked him to leave the country. Masari has fought the deportation order and he and his supporters continue to work in London, having at their disposal

¹M. Abir, *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis* (London, 1993).

²See R. Hrair Dekmejian, "The Rise of Political Islamism in Saudi Arabia," *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 48, no. 4 (Autumn 1994).

the latest telecommunications technology to link them with Saudi Arabia. In addition to distributing their weekly communiqué, *Rights*, and a series of numbered leaflets, CDLR's fax machines receive complaints, grievances, and information from its supporters in Saudi Arabia.

CAR was also established in London in April 1994. Its founder, Bin Laden, whose Saudi citizenship has been withdrawn, is known to be a hard-line Islamist supporting and sympathizing with Islamist movements in Yemen, Afghanistan, and Algeria. Bin Laden has written that CAR is an overarching Islamic organization working for the implementation of a religious program in all aspects of life.

WHY AN ISLAMIC OPPOSITION IN AN ISLAMIC STATE?

An explanation of the Saudi Islamic opposition needs to consider first and foremost the economic and political impact of the war, the characteristics of the Saudi state and its relation with society, and the fact that expansion of the education system, especially religious education, has not been matched by an increase in economic opportunities.

The Gulf War was perhaps the one cataclysmic event in Saudi Arabia's short history to have shaken the economic and political foundations of government. The total cost of the Gulf War to Saudi Arabia was estimated by Prince Nayif to be \$70 billion. Oil prices, meanwhile, fell from just under \$40 a barrel in the early 1980s to slightly over \$15 a barrel in 1995.

Moreover, according to a recent IMF report, the kingdom is believed to have run out of liquid overseas assets—that is, reserves it can draw down in an emergency. Before the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia could boast nearly \$120 billion in reserves; these have declined to \$64.9 billion. It is expected that the budget deficit for 1995 will lead to at least a 6 percent cut in spending.

Cuts in spending, however, do not seem to include a decrease in princely stipends—the monthly payments to members of the royal family, the amount of which depends on the degree of genealogical proximity to the al-Saud's main line of descent, seniority, and marital status. Despite successive budget deficits, these stipends continue to rise and are supplemented by an unofficial system whereby family members in need of funds tend to arrange for government departments to sign major contracts. Commissions to princes supplement their monthly stipends.

At the political level, the Gulf War created a crisis of legitimacy in the ruling group. The war led to a serious questioning of the rights of a government to rule after mismanaging the economy and overspending on an inefficient defense system. Inviting foreign troops to defend the "land of Islam" was a manifestation of both the dependency of the house of Saud on the United States and its total failure to achieve general self-sufficiency. This, combined with cuts in spending, which will most likely affect the state welfare system and the provision of social services, undermine loyalty to a rentier state that had previously bought off discontent with economic rewards. The government thus has to face the Islamic challenge without its economic weapons.

As was noted, the rise of the Islamic opposition is also related to the expansion of the education system, especially the growth in the number of students in the Islamic universities who upon graduation find themselves unemployed. In the past many such graduates were recruited to low-level jobs in the civil service and the religious institutions as imams and preachers, or sent abroad on religious missions. Today some respond to unemployment by giving their support to the Islamic opposition in return for a promise to ameliorate their economic situation under a regime more sensitive to their needs and concerns. This situation is in many ways a creation of the Saudi state itself, which endeavored throughout the 1970s to expand religious education—partly in response to the demands of the religious establishment and partly in response to its desire to establish its hegemony in other Muslim countries. The number of unemployed university graduates with high expectations is likely to increase given the demographic characteristics of this country. It is estimated that 60 percent of the Saudi population is under the age of 21; moreover, the population growth rate is one of the highest in the world, reaching between 3.8 and 3.9 percent annually. These population growth rates far outstrip the low levels of real GDP growth that the IMF anticipates the kingdom will experience over the next few years. Saudi Arabia's GDP growth has in fact dropped in 1994 to -3 percent and is expected to rise to only 1 percent in 1995.

However, the question remains why Islam rather than any other ideology has been most attractive to a disenchanted population, living with the contradiction of being citizens of one of the wealthiest states, yet having to accept the discom-

fort of tightening economic conditions. The answer lies in the country's poor political experience and lack of developed alternative political ideologies. Although a large country, Saudi Arabia has a small population that has over the past 60 years been conditioned to accept the myth that the royal *majlis* (council) is the arena where politics can be debated, and that it is the outcome of an interaction and consultation process between the king and his subjects. This, along with the absence of other arenas for expressing political opinions and criticism, perhaps explain why the mosques and the lecture halls of the religious universities are now providing political activists with a ready-made audience. Moreover, it is in the mosques and religious universities where Islamic political ideologies relating to the state and its legitimacy are defined, reinterpreted, and transmitted. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Islamic opposition plants its seeds in areas that cannot be directly and efficiently controlled by the state without trespassing on and violating a sphere whose control and monitoring remain one of the most difficult tasks facing the Saudi government in the 1990s.

WHAT THE OPPOSITION WANTS

The establishment of the CDLR and CAR represents a shift in the tactics of the opposition and a growing awareness that an umbrella organization is crucial for their Islamic program. The opposition is no longer satisfied with the petition method, in which the involvement of individuals can easily be intercepted by the government and punished by imprisonment, torture, and the loss of employment. Moreover, the Islamic opposition reached a point where it became impossible for its members to operate from within the country. The shift toward a more organized opposition has been accompanied by an elaboration on the reforms needed and an increase in communication with groups in the country.

What sort of political program does the CDLR propagate? A reading of its various communiqués, pamphlets, and interviews in Western and Arab media point to a number of features.

In the letter of introduction that announced the establishment of the CDLR in London, the committee projected a dual image of its purpose and function. The first image anchors the organization in the domain of humanitarian organizations; the second in Islam, understood to be the framework for

all its actions and motivations. It emphasizes that its understanding of "legitimate human rights" stems from Islam rather than from other current formulations believed to be illegitimate, a subtle reference to Western perceptions of the concept, although the CDLR statement does not directly specify these alternative perceptions. The committee, however, refrains from spelling out these Islamic legitimate human rights, which it believes is the job of "people of knowledge," a reference to the role of the ulama. Yet the CDLR sees itself as an organization standing for the "legitimate rights of individuals," an assumption represented by its name. When pressed to clarify whether this involves respect for "human rights" as understood in the West, such as respect for religious freedom and women's rights, the CDLR explains its position by emphasizing "the respect of individual rights as laid down by the sharia."

In a subsequent communiqué, the committee stated that "it is not a *hizb siyasi*, a political party as propagated by the media, and it does not have political goals." This official rhetoric tries to locate the organization in a sphere removed from secular understanding of political behavior. Furthermore, it adds that its adoption of issues such as arrests, abuse of human rights, and torture should not be understood as an infringement on the domain of the

judiciary, the courts, and the majlis of grievances. Such statements define for the organization a specific sphere of action, rooted in its understanding of what is permissible, possible, and recommended by Islam.

While maintaining that it is an Islamic "humanitarian" organization, CDLR members do make statements that can only be described as political. Let us examine here their position regarding the royal family. In a published interview, CDLR spokesman Masari has affirmed that "The [members of the] House of Saud are like dinosaurs. They should die out. The government is the monarchy, is the state, is the family, is the mafia." Similarly, committee director Faqih insists that the "leader of an Islamic state should be elected and accountable," thus implying that the al-Saud do not fall in this category.

Another feature of this discourse is the committee's promotion of the language of reform rather than revolution. In its program the CDLR calls for the establishment of an independent judiciary, an

The so-called Islamic challenge in Saudi Arabia is not yet a mature political movement.

economy in which wealth is equally distributed, a foreign policy more sensitive to Islamic concerns, and a strong army capable of defending the country in times of crisis. This proposed reform is to be inspired by the laws of the sharia and respect for its interpreters who, in the committee's opinion, have been reduced to the role of state apologists. This is a reference to the current situation in Saudi Arabia, where the religious establishment continues to issue *fatwas* in support of Saudi policies.

The CDLR insists that criticism of the government stems from an important Islamic principle, *nasihah* (criticism and advice), which is a duty of every Muslim. It believes that the *nasihah* in modern times cannot be confined and secretive. The situation in Saudi Arabia requires that criticism become public through the establishment of the right to free assembly and free expression.

In general, the CDLR's agenda has been described as leaning toward moderation and the label "moderate Islamists" has been closely associated with their name. This label is perhaps promoted by the fact that the committee's founders are Western-educated professionals; Masari, for example, is a physics professor, fluent in English and, more important, ready to enter into dialogue with the West, or at least with the journalists and reporters who are increasingly following the group's activities and publications.

This "moderate" characteristic is not known to be shared by CAR. Its program has four points: first, the termination of all aspects of the rule of *jahiliyyah* (ignorance) and its replacement by God's sharia; second, the establishment of true Islamic justice; third, the reform of all the state's institutions and its purification from corruption; and fourth, the revival of the principle of *ihtisab* (accountability of the rulers), and the regaining of the umma's general rights. As to achieving these objectives, CAR notes the importance of raising people's awareness of the issues; using the propagation of virtue and prohibition of vice; the Islamic call; cooperation with other Islamic organizations; and other legitimate means. While CAR's tone appears more radical than that of the CDLR, the fact that the two groups cooperate through joint publications indicates a degree of mutual understanding and sympathy.

While the CDLR cooperates with CAR, it has distanced itself from more radical Islamist groups that threaten to use violence in the country. In September 1994, the CDLR issued a communiqué denouncing a clandestine organization by the name of the

Battalion of Faith after receiving information from the latter stating that if Sheikh Salman al-Audah was not released, the group would kidnap American and Western citizens, members of the royal family, and senior officers in the armed forces, and destroy investment corporations of the al-Saud family. The committee reacted by stating that "the CDLR distances itself completely from the communiqué. It also affirms its adoption of the policy of change by peaceful means despite the harsh and irritating behavior of the authorities."

EVALUATING THE ISLAMISTS

The so-called Islamic challenge in Saudi Arabia is not yet a mature political movement comparable to established forms of political Islam such as the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, or Jordanian Muslim groups. Islamic opposition in other Arab countries has been formed in the medium of political parties. As was noted, the CDLR refuses to acknowledge that the organization is a political party; it remains to be seen whether the Islamic opposition to the Saudi state will develop an institutional framework and modern party-like administration. The Saudi Islamic challenge is best described as an amalgamation of opposition voices using the rhetoric of Islam to challenge the legitimacy of the state and its ruling group.

Although the rhetoric of the Saudi Islamic opposition seems to be deeply rooted in "essentialism and traditionalism," reflected in the opposition's emphasis on returning to true Islam as practiced by early Muslims, mainly the Prophet and his immediate successors, the messages of this opposition (especially those of CDLR) are far from being "fossilized" obsessions with relics from the past. Given that this opposition is inspired by one of the most "conservative" Islamic schools of thought, namely the Hanbali-Wahhabi interpretation, Islamic jurisprudence is most innovative in questioning the already established rules of the Saudi political game, which themselves have so far been embedded in the teachings of early Muslim scholars. The present opposition is an example of syncretism rather than orthodoxy. However, it is too early to tell whether the theological sophistication of the new generation of ulama is easily translated into clear political reforms or agendas.

The present Saudi Islamic opposition is dynamic and pragmatic in its messages and actions. This is manifested in the centrality of concepts such as social justice, human rights, and

political participation. Although these are discussed from a strictly Islamic point of view, the way these concepts are framed, projected, and represented reflects the opposition's immersion in and familiarity with modern political discourses on these issues. Furthermore, this focus helps open up channels of communication and points of convergence between the Saudi Islamists and other regional and international organizations concerned with similar issues relating to human rights.

The Saudi Islamic opposition is also breaking new ground with its indigenous Islamist discourse by forcibly arguing for a change in past practices in the country. The slogan of one advocate, for instance, is to go beyond "ablution, childbirth, and purification of feet in the absence of water." This slogan refers to an obsession with the details of *fiqh* that dominates religious education and instruction received in schools and debated in centers of higher religious learning. Those who want to move away from such a preoccupation demand the reintroduction of religion in politics and a termination of the present accommodation between the state and religion, above all the containment of the religious establishment by the state.

Throughout its recent history, the state has marginalized religion and confined its role to educating the masses in matters relating to *fiqh*, such as prayers and ablutions. Although there is no de jure separation between religion and politics in the country, there has been a de facto acceptance of separate spheres of influence represented in the division of labor between the government and the religious authorities. The ruling group controlled the political affairs of the country while the ulama controlled the spiritual well-being of the community. Against this background, the opposition wants to reinstate religion in what it believes to be an important arena—that of state politics.

Nevertheless, Saudi Islamists have their limitations. In their attempt to appeal to a wider audience, it is not clear whether they will overcome the problem of representation. It seems that the movement is strong among a subsection of Saudi society: middle class urbanites, low-ranking civil servants and bureaucrats, and a group of young ulama and activists. This excludes other influential groups in the country. Two groups in particular seem to be underrepresented: the traditional tribal groups that had been historically influential in politics, and the

educated wealthy elites and professionals who more recently had been important in the modernization process. While these two groups share with the Islamists the absence of a formal organizational framework through which their interests can be expressed, traditional tribal leaders and wealthy elites appear to be in an advantageous position toward the state. Historically, they have not been marginalized since their interests at different times coincided with those of the state. In the case of wealthy professional elites, their well-being has been dependent on the state and unless the latter ignores their interests, it is unlikely they will join the Islamist cause. Similarly, traditional tribal leadership has always been rewarded for its allegiance to the state by an elaborate subsidy system, recognition of its status, and a wide marriage network with the royal family. Tribal loyalty to the regime is unlikely to be altered unless the foundation of its

relationship with the state is shaken. It is not surprising that Islamists found support among a newly emerging category in Saudi society, the marginalized city dwellers, whose recent education acquired in the country and abroad has been accompanied by a rising expectation not only to share wealth but also to accomplish the acknowledgment of their status, which has so far been peripheral in the indigenous social hierarchy.

FROM FAX TO FISSION?

There is also the problem of regionalism. The Islamists are largely drawn from the population of the central province, Nejd in general and the Qasim in particular. In the nineteenth century the Qasim had been caught up between two regional power centers, the Saudis in Riyadh and the Rashidis in Hail. The loyalty of the town emirs oscillated between the politics of the north and south. The region and its merchant and agricultural population were never able to escape the domination of one or the other. With the creation of a modern state endowed with huge economic resources, the region benefited like other provinces from modernization, the welfare system, and the expansion of education. In addition to its traditional tribal leadership and its wealthy merchant class, the Qasim witnessed a rise in the number of middle class, young urban groups with reasonable standard of education.

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It has been implied that the Islamists have capitalized on the rising middle class to spread their messages. However, it is not clear whether the movement will succeed in breaking through the regional barriers that divide the country. For example, the Hijaz and the eastern province with its predominantly Shiite population tend to be distant from the present Islamist activists, who have so far been inspired by Wahhabism. The theological roots of today's Islamism remain hostile to other interpretations in Islam, specifically to the Hijazi version and more so to the Shiite doctrines. To many Hijazis and Shia the present Islamists remind them of the zeal of the early Ikhwan who, under the banner of the founder of modern Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud, inflicted on them serious atrocities in the name of spreading the call of Wahhabism and the purification of faith from innovations. It remains to be seen whether the Nejdi Islamists will overcome the fears of these regions by showing tolerance of religious diversity. The evidence suggests that this has not yet taken place and there is no intention to proceed in that direction.

The state has been aware of the problem of regionalism and the corresponding religious traditions in the provinces. In a preemptive strike, the regime organized a reconciliation with the London-based Shiite opposition immediately after the Gulf War to prevent the possibility of cooperation between the Shiite leadership and the Islamists. More recently, it is reported that the regime has been relaxing its control over the manifestations of Hijazi Islam by allowing a Hijazi preacher, Sheikh Alawi al-Maliki, known for promoting Sufism and previously forbidden to preach, to resume his religious activities.

While the Islamists remain caught up in the problems of representation and regionalism, their strength derives from the fact that they provide a form of populism that had been unknown in Saudi Arabia. Above all, the movement absorbs the tide of frustration among newly emerging groups by

providing an arena for political debate, the expression of discontent, and the crystallization of opposition to the state. The mosques and the lecture halls of the universities are transformed into a space to be appropriated by activists and their supporters in the absence of other legitimate means to express opinion and discuss important political, social, and economic issues. As these arenas are increasingly being controlled by the state in response to the transformation of their functions by the Islamists, the opposition has sought to work from abroad armed with the fax machine.

The question that needs to be asked at this juncture is whether the Saudi Islamists can reverse the trend of modernity and install a puritanical Islamic society, inspired by the teachings of Wahhabism. Their use of the fax machine to transmit their messages and communicate with their supporters is a product of this modernity. Can Saudi society enter the twenty-first century without the fax machine, which in the Islamists' opinion is the tool for the forthcoming revolution? Would an Islamist success revive the old mechanism of fission, that is the disintegration of the state under pressure from regional contestants to the house of Saud? Given the limitations of the Islamists at the level of representation and regionalism, any serious inroads they may accomplish in the future lead one to conclude that a return to regionalism cannot be ruled out as a possibility. A resurgence of regional identities and traditional tribal loyalties and a revival of alternative religious traditions may all strengthen and encourage this. What distinguishes this situation from the nineteenth-century tradition is that this time the stakes are higher and the means can be more violent. This cannot be a velvet revolution, but a serious engagement of social and political forces that the state has succeeded in keeping dormant for the past 60 years. It is not unimaginable that the strengthening of the Islamists may be paralleled by a reawakening of these latent forces. ■

"The Persian Gulf War brought the politics of Kuwait and its neighbors to the television sets of people in the United States, Europe, and Japan, and tied the Arabian peninsula states to the willingness of such viewers to underwrite their security. . . . The political weather affecting the small states in the Gulf now comes from far away as well as next door, and complicates their already half-hearted efforts to rely more on their neighbors than on governments and populations whose interests, as well as locations, are farther away."

Gulf Winds: Inclement Political Weather in the Arabian Peninsula

MARY ANN TÉTREAUULT

In 1990 the Arabian peninsula states, with the exception of Yemen, rallied behind Kuwait in opposition to Iraq's invasion and occupation. Now only Bahrain and Saudi Arabia remain firmly committed to maintaining United Nations Security Council sanctions against Iraq until it complies with all of the resolutions passed in response to the invasion. This division among the Arab Gulf states is unfortunate. Regional security policy is theoretically a responsibility of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), yet its members (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates) have been unable to agree on a variety of security issues for some time, especially Kuwait's recurrent security problems with Iran during the Iran-Iraq War and then with Iraq during the Persian Gulf War. In 1991, for example, when Kuwait's oilfields were still ablaze, GCC members refused to "lend" oil to Kuwait under the provisions of a 1987 oil-sharing agreement.¹ Kuwaitis have no reason to believe that the GCC will be any more helpful in future security crises.

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¹Mary Ann Tétreault, *The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and the Economics of the New World Order* (Westport, Conn.: Quorum Books, 1995), p. 147. The GCC abandoned Kuwait in the mid-1980s, when the Iran-Iraq War was endangering its shipping. Kuwait was forced to appeal to the United States and other extraregional powers for help.

Today, domestic upheavals in several GCC states add to the general instability of regional foreign affairs. These uncertainties stem not just from evidence of internal instability in Iraq, but also from increased Iranian belligerence over long-standing territorial disputes in the Persian Gulf. The dependence of every GCC member on oil and gas revenues makes all of them rivals in hydrocarbon markets. This economic rivalry is aggravated by the large number of boundary disputes among GCC members themselves. The council has made the resolution of these conflicts a top priority. If it can promote significant movement on at least some of them, it may acquire enough momentum to act more decisively with respect to other security issues as well.

SUPPRESSING DISSENT IN BAHRAIN

Widespread civil unrest associated with an ongoing pro-democracy movement in Bahrain began in December 1994. Bahrain's government had suspended parts of the constitution and dissolved parliament in 1975, but since the end of the Persian Gulf War a broad-based nonviolent movement to restore constitutional government has grown rapidly. A committee of 14 prominent citizens presented the government with a petition signed by 25,000 Bahrainis a short time before the 1994 summit meeting of the GCC, which was scheduled to begin in Bahrain on December 19; the government saw the timing of the petition as reflecting the dissidents' desire to use the occasion to embarrass it. Perhaps believing that it could head off a public confrontation before the summit,

the government arrested Ali Salman, a popular young Shiite cleric and leader of the pro-democracy movement, on December 5.

The arrest touched off a wave of demonstrations followed by an immediate crackdown, not just by Bahraini security forces but by Saudi Arabian reinforcements as well. There were mass arrests of demonstrators and an unknown number of deaths and injuries, some reportedly due to torture. Even after Salman and two other Shiite clerics were exiled on January 15, 1995, demonstrations, arrests, and harassment of Shiites continued.

The December GCC summit took place as scheduled. It began with a speech by Sheikh Isa, the emir of Bahrain, who noted the need to "confront challenges to security and stability"; it ended with a communiqué denouncing Islamist "extremism." Yet even with the stimulus of street riots, the GCC could not reach unanimity on a joint security policy. As in the past, Kuwait rejected a proposal to liberalize procedures to extradite and to permit crossborder pursuit of suspects. Some Kuwaitis argue that similar GCC proposals violate Kuwait's constitution and are little more than blank checks allowing Saudi Arabia to meddle in the domestic politics of its neighbors. Qatar, which has a history of territorial disputes with both Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, also rejected the proposed security regime.

The government of Bahrain insisted from the beginning that the petitions and demonstrations were not motivated by domestic conditions but were Iranian-inspired and led by clerical "terrorists." The prominence of Shiite clergy among the dissidents was cited as evidence, and Shiite neighborhoods reportedly bore the brunt of nighttime helicopter sweeps, tear gas attacks, and arrests. This played well to other anti-Iranian and anti-Islamist forces in the GCC but it has had negative effects in Bahrain itself, deepening the split between Shia and Sunni.

Blaming Iran and other "outsiders" as the source of Shiite disaffection ignores its many local causes. The economy depends on tourism and on Bahrain's depressed and shrinking oil industry. There are fewer and fewer jobs for new labor force entrants, and young Shiite graduates face hiring discrimination that favors the politically dominant, though numerically inferior, Sunni Bahrainis. Teachers in Shiite areas have been worried about a decline in student enthusiasm for some time. "Who can blame them," one told me in 1992. "There isn't much [of a] future for them here whether they do well in school or not."

Economic reasons are far from the only issues motivating the current unrest in Bahrain. Last April about 300 Bahraini women signed a petition requesting a return to constitutional government. The petition asked that security forces not violate the human rights of demonstrators and those under arrest, and that Bahraini women be permitted to participate fully in public life. Following the presentation of the petition, security forces interviewed the signers and tried to persuade them to make formal written apologies. Several who refused, including University of Bahrain Professor Munira Fakhro, were fired from their government jobs.

A midyear cabinet reshuffle failed to mollify the pro-democracy forces, while recurrent predictions that the government would respond to some of the political demands—even though it might not be able to work magic on Bahrain's economic problems—have repeatedly erred on the side of optimism. Meanwhile, an undetermined number of Bahrainis remain in prison despite the October 1995 release of several hundred prisoners. Moreover, no one knows exactly under what conditions the Bahrainis are being held or whether conjectures that some have been taken to Saudi Arabia are true.

The continued involvement of Saudi Arabia in Bahrain's domestic security crisis bolsters the government's hard-line position. Given Bahrain's economic dependence on Saudi Arabian oil and tourists, its leaders cannot afford to ignore Saudi insistence that pro-democracy forces be suppressed. However, repression has had no visible success and may have irreparably damaged what had been generally good relations between the regime and the population despite disagreements over the need for political change.

QATAR: COUP DE FAMILLE

On June 27, 1995, a less than rare event in the small Gulf states occurred in Qatar. Taking advantage of the absence of his father, the Emir Sheikh Khalifa, Crown Prince Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani declared himself the new ruler. Sheikh Hamad's actions might have seemed like a bolt from the blue to his father, but they did not radically alter the status quo in Qatar, where the crown prince had been making most of the day-to-day decisions for years.

One of the conflicts between Sheikh Khalifa and his son was over the latter's foreign policy. This included his interest in normalizing relations with Israel, Iraq, and the Palestine Liberation Organiza-

tion, positions that did not endear Qatar to Saudi Arabia or to Kuwait. Saudi pressure on the old ruler, and the resulting deterioration in father-son relations, are believed to have triggered the coup. Although Qatar's political storm ended quickly, its economy faces difficulties unlikely to disappear in a flash. Its budget deficit is accelerating, in part because of an increase in state spending, and its private economy seems to be contracting: GDP fell 5.9 percent in 1993, money supply growth slowed, and prices fell in several sectors. However, a local stock exchange that was established last summer could be used by the government to privatize some state-owned industries, which would stimulate the local economy. Still, Qatar's economy remains highly dependent on hydrocarbons. Despite a predicted bonanza from gas exports from Qatar's giant North Field, this new production will not fix the problem of single-industry dependency. And although Qatar's population is small and its merchant elite divided, the regime cannot neglect citizen demands if it is to retain citizen loyalties.

STILL WAITING FOR THE "NEW KUWAIT"

Kuwait's democratic institutions continue to function following the 1992 election, which produced a new parliament six years after the suspension of constitutional government. Even so, Kuwait's crown prince, prime minister, and heir apparent, Sheikh Saad al-Abdullah al-Sabah, a man with little tolerance for parliamentary opposition, has been reported as having asked the emir, Sheikh Jabir al-Ahmad al-Sabah, to dissolve the assembly on at least three occasions.

A nasty face-off over the interpretation of article 71 of the constitution, which gives final legislative authority to the parliament, ended without resolution. The conflict evoked unusually sharp exchanges between the government and the opposition, including a ruling by the assembly speaker, Ahmad al-Sadoun, to expunge from the record a comment by the foreign minister, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad, that Kuwaitis were "tired of the assembly and its futile arguments," and government suspension of one of Kuwait's Arabic language newspapers, *Al-Anbaa*, for five days in mid-March 1995.

But recent news from the democratization front has not been entirely bleak. Stimulated in part by prisoners on a hunger strike and perhaps even

more by a critical report from Amnesty International on human rights violations in Kuwait, the government abolished the controversial state security court by canceling its enabling legislation in July 1995. Later that month the government ratified three international human rights conventions.

Kuwait's internal dissension is muted by the unexpected vigor of its economy. A strengthening of oil prices in 1995 has allowed the country to adhere fairly closely to OPEC's quota of 2 million barrels per day of crude production and still manage to make its scheduled payments on the \$5.5 billion loan it took out to finance postwar reconstruction. Despite weakness in its banking system, Kuwait's stock market boomed during much of the year and each tiny step the government takes toward privatization has been greeted enthusiastically by Kuwaiti investors.

Yet security issues continue to cast a shadow on

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economic recovery. The crown prince repeatedly stirs popular fears of renewed Iraqi military attacks on Kuwait. This happened most recently late in the summer of 1995. But each instance of official hysteria triggers capital flight and severe popular unrest. Kuwait is also asked to pony up a substantial share of the cost of American military maneuvers that are undertaken to deter these alleged threats. Given the growing criticism of military spending and resistance to the imposition of regular taxation to support that spending, the government risks Kuwait's future

security by its recurrent cries of wolf. Though the crown prince may believe he is making up for the lightness with which the government greeted Saddam's military preparations in 1990, he is also making it difficult for Kuwaitis to feel safe in their own country.

This deep insecurity is reflected in countless local newspaper reports of the increase in violent crimes committed by Kuwaitis. A study published last summer reported high levels of family violence in Kuwait as well. Psychologists worry about the lack of emotional closure afflicting Kuwaitis who are still unable to adjust to their experience of invasion and occupation. Widespread hopes that the 1992 election would mark the birth of a "new Kuwait" have been dashed by renewed conflict between the government and the National Assembly.

Kuwait must also make major decisions that

have been postponed since well before the Iraqi invasion. One centers on the remaining debt outstanding from the 1982 crash of the Suq al-Manakh, the illegal stock market. Although yet another debt repayment plan was passed by the 1992 parliament, complaints by debtors have led to additional revision and postponements. As each new date of reckoning looms, the debtors' complaints, combined with their predictions of recession and capital flight, produce a new adjustment. Although the crown prince, said to be among the largest debtors, has publicly agreed that the most recent rescheduling plan should be the last, one hesitates to say that after so many years of false hopes Kuwait is truly ready to bring this financial soap opera to a conclusion.

WHO IS A KUWAITI?

Another long-standing problem is the issue of the *bidun*. The *bidun* (literally "without" in Arabic) are Kuwaitis who do not have official nationality. Some have lived in Kuwait for generations but their fathers or grandfathers neglected to register for citizenship. Others have concealed or destroyed identification papers from countries whose living conditions are less congenial than Kuwait's. Many Kuwaiti *bidun* are refugees who left the country during the Iraqi occupation or were deported afterward.

Bidun had a special status in Kuwait until 1987, when a new nationality law defined them as foreigners and state agencies began to push them out of their jobs. They were, however, prominently represented among Kuwaiti military and police forces, and some had married into Kuwaiti families. Intermarriages cause new problems when the Kuwaiti partner is a woman. Differences in citizen entitlements for men and women mean that such families cannot claim the same level of state support as families with Kuwaiti male heads-of-household, while the children of such marriages are denied Kuwaiti citizenship under Islamic principles governing hereditary rights and claims. Since liberation, all *bidun* remaining in Kuwait, including the children of Kuwaiti mothers and *bidun* fathers, have been denied education, jobs, social benefits, and even the right to remain in Kuwait unless they have been given financial guarantees by a Kuwaiti citizen.²

The 1992 parliament has begun to tackle citizenship issues. It passed a law giving the sons of naturalized Kuwaitis the right to vote and run for office. But despite an active campaign for equal civil and political rights launched by women suffragists in 1992, legally, socially, and religiously sanctioned differences based on gender persist. The *bidun* issue also remains unresolved. Some Kuwaitis believe that *bidun* should not be given citizenship. Others say that those who can demonstrate long residence or family relationships to Kuwaiti citizens should be made citizens. Few want to see all *bidun* accepted as citizens because the number of *bidun* still residing in Kuwait is large—an estimated 120,000 to 180,000. Most believe that to grant full citizenship rights (and benefits) to so many *bidun* would threaten economic stability.

Kuwait, like other countries in the region, also has its share of religious tension, although the small size of the Shiite community (about 30 percent of the population) and its degree of integration in the national community tend to moderate sectarian conflict. However, Islamists in the parliament keep religion on the front burner. They have challenged educational policy by intervening in a university conflict over whether female medical students should be allowed to veil, and by their repeated, though unsuccessful, attempts to remove the secular minister of education, Ahmad al-Ribi. Islamist influence has been muted in recent months by the regime's apparent retreat from its tacit support for selected Sunni Islamists, a tactic intended to manage the opposition by keeping it divided.

Externally, Kuwait's security problems are the same as those confronting its neighbors to the south. All the Arabian peninsula states are weaker than the neighborhood bullies, Iraq and Iran. Kuwait has cobbled together a temporary solution to its own vulnerability by signing bilateral treaties with several major powers in the coalition that liberated it from Iraq. These treaties, however, include time limits reflecting the non-Gulf partners' intention to make them only stop-gap measures until regional defense systems can be put in place.

Concerns that either Iran or Iraq could reignite conflict in the region are not far-fetched. Iran has tightened its hold on the Tumbs and Abu Musa islands over which the United Arab Emirates claims sovereignty, and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia do not produce oil from two of their four oilfields

²See Mary Ann Tétreault and Haya al-Mughni, "Gender, Citizenship, and Nationalism in Kuwait," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, November/December 1995.

off the shore of the former Neutral Zone because they fear Iranian retaliation. Meanwhile, the highly publicized defections last August of members of Saddam's inner circle, along with a continuing trickle of Iraqi political refugees into Kuwait, raise concern that the domestic situation in Iraq is becoming dangerously unstable, which has increased fears that a post-Saddam Iraq may be unable to check Iran's power.

THE GULF FORECAST

Political barometers in the Gulf caution us to watch for continued unsettled weather, but give few hints about the most likely target of the next big storm. A general economic upturn would improve the domestic and international security of the region, yet economic improvements are unlikely to end demands for a return to constitutional government in Bahrain, while a growing economy has done little to make Kuwaitis feel secure either with respect to their neighbors or their government.

An easing of internal conflicts is necessary if the Gulf states are to devise security arrangements to reduce their dependence on extraregional powers. It is ironic that Kuwait, whose anti-Western bias was so notable before the Iraqi invasion, has entrusted its survival almost entirely to the generosity of countries it formerly disdained. Yet this is also understandable given regional rivalries, the persistent inability of the GCC to address its members' security needs—especially in the case of Kuwait—and the effect of the Iraqi invasion on the assumption that Arab states would not attack one another.

Still, the advantages of joint security arrangements for the GCC states are clear since they are militarily incapable of defending themselves individually against a strong regional opponent. Thus, some kind of military alliance is necessary for long-term survival. At the same time, dependence on extraregional powers for military defense aggravates another source of insecurity—the economic

drain caused by arms purchases from foreign defenders and the bills they present after every rescue effort.

As defense analyst Patrick Clawson has noted, the GCC states are pressed hard by the United States and others to purchase arms they cannot always use at a rate that their economies cannot sustain.³ Yet it is not difficult to see that these tiny states perceive sales pitches from the industrial giants as thinly disguised demands for a quid pro quo if they want to ensure that their defenders will still be there the next time they are needed. Extravagant arms purchases also reduce the ability of GCC states to respond positively to the needs of their citizens. Thus, they sow the seeds of future domestic conflict without addressing long-term security needs.

A growing security problem for the small Gulf states, and one that illustrates some of the difficulties of relying on the GCC for solutions, is Saudi Arabia. It too faces economic crisis, Islamist pressures, conflicts among domestic factions and the ruling family, and repeated calls for a more open political system. These internal difficulties may explain the Saudi regime's anti-democracy intervention in Bahrain and perhaps some of its arm-twisting of Qatar's former ruler. What its GCC partners fear, however, is the ability of Saudi Arabia to use its superior size and resource base to dominate its neighbors. Most are wary of exchanging a dangerous dependence on extraregional powers for a possibly equally dangerous dependence on a local hegemon.

Kuwait's belated improvements in its attitude toward human rights demonstrate another important change in the politics of the Arab Gulf: events there are no longer just local concerns. The Persian Gulf War brought the politics of Kuwait and its neighbors to the television sets of people in the United States, Europe, and Japan, and tied the Arabian peninsula states to the willingness of such viewers to underwrite their security. As a result, the political weather affecting the small states in the Gulf now comes from far away as well as next door, and complicates their already half-hearted efforts to rely more on their neighbors than on governments and populations whose interests, as well as locations, are farther away. ■

³Patrick Clawson, "U.S.-GCC Security Relations, II: Growing Domestic Economic and Political Problems," *Strategic Forum*, August 1995.

"To prove that he is 'the man of the moment,' Yasir Arafat must show Israel and the Western powers that he can put down Hamas while convincing Palestinian public opinion that he wants to integrate Hamas into the political process. Such is a summary of the impossible equation that the Palestinian National Authority confronts."

Arafat and the Islamists: Conflict or Cooperation?

BASSMA KODMANI-DARWISH

The founding of the Palestinian National Authority on a fragment of Palestine was a much awaited event that is unfolding in a very imperfect manner. The PLO, having arrived at its final destination after a seemingly interminable and tiring voyage, has encountered an already aware youngster—the Islamic movement—whose maturity and vigor are characteristic of an adolescent.

CAUTION: CHANGE IN ENEMY!

A strong and unexpected consensus between Israel, a majority of Arab regimes, and the United States has been displayed since the beginning of the peace process, captured in a simple admonition: "Caution: Change in Enemy!" After Saddam Hussein, the Islamists in the region now constitute the most serious threat to the peace process—especially in Palestine.

However, the Islamist movement, Hamas in particular, has already made the psychological transition necessary to realistically and pragmatically confront the new situation that emerged after the signing of the Oslo agreements in 1993. Since then, no leader of the movement has repeated that the objective remains the liberation of Palestine "from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River." None can wish for or even advocate a renouncement of the agreement's decisions on Gaza and Jericho.

The popularity of the movement itself and the

fact that it has become a major political force entails a behavior that one could qualify as more "responsible" or simply rational, conceived to preserve the position of the movement in the political arena and to avoid a voluntary marginalization.

In effect, the opposition is already a *de facto* opposition to the terms of the peace agreements, and not to the principle itself of an agreement. The establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is an accepted objective, since it clearly corresponds to the wishes of the majority. Yet the Oslo agreements do not seem to carry the promise of a near and real peace as much as they open the way for the Islamists to compete for power. It follows that the stake has become a struggle for power between two competing claims for legitimacy: that of the PLO, acquired through 25 years of armed struggle, and an Islamic movement that claims that same legitimacy in the name of its present resistance in the territories, the only means it sees (as opposed to a peaceful settlement) to force Israel to evacuate the territories.

The Islamists face a dilemma. If they refuse to participate in the interim period and if they refuse to take part in the elections, they could find themselves accused of favoring the perpetuation of the present situation in the territories, which is untenable. If they participate in elections—it is estimated that they could receive more than a third of the Palestinian vote—they would seem to be tipping the entire situation in favor of the process and giving credibility to the agreements they initially fought against.

From this, one can see the etching of a position of compromise. Hamas has called for a national dialogue encompassing all forces in favor of a democratic reform of the PLO and its institutions.

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The movement does not want to bear responsibility for the PLO's collapse. But if the PLO did collapse on its own because of the wrong choices it made, the Islamist movement would present itself as the only structured alternative, with its own base within the population, independent of the PLO and capable of relieving it.

OPPOSING THE ISLAMISTS

To prove that he is "the man of the moment," Yasir Arafat must show Israel and the Western powers that he can put down Hamas while convincing Palestinian public opinion that he wants to integrate Hamas into the political process. Such is a summary of the impossible equation that the Palestinian National Authority confronts.

More than Israel, it is the United States that is warning Arafat against an agreement with Hamas, and it is the Americans who are pressuring him to make the "strategic choice" of suppressing the Islamists in order to acquire international recognition and the aid attached to such status.

The most important constraint is undoubtedly that the Palestinian National Authority operates within a space that it does not entirely control. The status of autonomy in the territories it manages creates a juridical ambiguity that represents a major handicap to developing a coherent and efficient strategy in almost all areas, including policy toward the Islamists.

The absence of sovereignty, and thus total control, increases public feeling of the need for an authoritarian power to make up for the Palestinian National Authority's juridical weakness. Indeed, in this context a process of democratization is an additional weakening factor.

To "inaugurate" its sovereignty and establish its authority, a central power is forced, at first, to impose order by suppressing rivals who could defy its authority. The Israeli experience brings its own example of this to the Palestinians. At the birth of the Israeli state, David Ben-Gurion used his army to disarm the rival party's militia, break its military structure before integrating it within the national army and its chiefs in the government, and extend the control of the state apparatus to all of Israel.

Without the previous establishment of order, it is said, Israel could not have developed into a democratic system. The Palestinian National Authority clearly does not have the means to pursue a similar strategy. The debate is nevertheless very heated on the question of whether or not priority should be given to consolidating the central

authority before establishing a democracy. This debate is, of course, tainted and worrisome: tainted because it is easy to invert the reasoning by arguing that the establishment of a strong authority must come from democratic elections; worrisome because it recalls the discourse many newly independent states have used to justify self-perpetuating authoritarian regimes.

Certainly, natural authoritarianism and Arafat's excessive personal management of business explain a lot. But it is more the conditions under which the Palestinian National Authority was born and the requirements imposed by Israel that have forced Arafat to adopt a behavior similar to that of neighboring Arab governments. For example, the fact that a Palestinian police force was deployed even before Arafat arrived in Gaza encouraged the impression that its first step was to establish a police authority whose primary mission would be to maintain order over the rights or even the fundamental needs of the population.

Another major difficulty for Arafat is that with the Islamists he faces a movement of national liberation, not just a domestic opposition objecting to his policies. A strategy aimed at giving satisfaction to the Islamists in social areas in exchange for giving up their weapons cannot be accepted by a movement whose entire popularity lies in its acts of resistance. As long as it has not ended the occupation, the Palestinian National Authority will find it difficult to legitimize a policy of suppressing a movement fighting precisely that occupation.

In addition, when the leaders of Hamas declare that they do not wish to confront the Palestinian National Authority and that they are aiming at Israel exclusively, they admittedly spare the authority but at the same time they forbid the authority to suppress them or they force it to appear as the instigator of confrontation.

Finally, the Palestinian National Authority will have only the strength Israel is willing to give it. In its strategy toward the occupied territories, however, Israel acts as if they were part of its national space and has not resolved to let an internal dynamic develop without interference. Hence, the decisive question is to know the priorities of the Israeli government's objectives. Does it wish for a democratic Palestinian entity by its side, or does it prefer to see Yasir Arafat take on the role of policeman of the territories in its place?

Is the Israeli government convinced that Hamas cannot be bypassed? And if so, does it intend to grant Arafat the room to maneuver so that he

might search for a consensus with the Islamists? Or is the Israeli government trying to develop on its own a strategy toward the Islamists?

ISRAEL: COURTING BOTH SIDES

The terrorist attacks conducted by Hamas since the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority have greatly harmed the Palestinian population because of the subsequent Israeli sanctions; they have also achieved the results sought by the Islamists—an increasing number of Israeli officials have publicly expressed awareness that the movement is a partner that cannot be shunted aside and have said they favor engaging in a dialogue with the movement.

Since the spring of 1994, the Israeli government has tried to establish contacts with the moderate wing of Hamas. This was seen notably in April of that year after one of the leaders of the movement, Moussa Abou-Marzouk, suggested that Hamas could possibly conclude a truce with Israel. In the following days, General Almog, governor of the Gaza Strip, met a member of the Hamas leadership and proposed the release of Hamas leader Sheik Ahmad Yassin in exchange for opening a bilateral dialogue.

Even if this moderate discourse by certain Islamists is contradicted by other more uncompromising declarations, it is interesting to note Israel's eagerness to respond more positively to these overtures, even making some itself.

This attitude can be interpreted in several ways. If Israel is indeed convinced that it can no longer ignore Hamas, nothing guarantees that it intends as a consequence to give Arafat a free hand to negotiate with the Islamists. Fearing an inter-Palestinian agreement negotiated without it (and probably against it), the Israeli government may be trying to position itself as the third unavoidable partner. For a good number of Israeli leaders, autonomy continues to mean territories integrated within the national space where Israel continues to have its say and its means of control. This habitual tendency, motivated by a desire for power or an obsession with security, expresses itself as a will to control and influence the domestic situations of its neighbors (as it did in Lebanon, notably in the late 1970s and early 1980s).

Palestinian worries are deeper still. If Israel engages in a direct dialogue with Hamas, it would

represent in the eyes of the Palestinian National Authority a re-questioning of the exclusive legitimacy of the PLO, the PLO being at the core of the Oslo agreements and the right to exclusive legitimacy being the reason why Arafat agreed to make important concessions in the first place.

Israel undoubtedly wants to prevent the Islamists from coming to power, but Israel also has so far not allowed Arafat to take advantage of the interim period to build the political foundations of a future state.

SETTING POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

The Palestinian National Authority possesses some of the attributes of a governmental authority. It enjoys the recognition that makes it a legal actor under international law and confers on it exclusive responsibility for the interim period before elections are held. The authority enjoys an interior security apparatus and a police force for which it pays the salaries. Despite the slowness and complications that delay the dispatch of international aid, only the PNA has the ability to recruit and pay the employees of its administration, and all financing of economic projects has to transit through the authority.

More important than these attributes of government rule, however, is the political trump card the Palestinian National Authority holds. The Palestinian population in the territories has not forgotten that when the peace process was launched in 1991, the intifada had reached a dead end and the prospects for exiting this dead end, were gloomy indeed. Arafat is therefore in a position to recall this in order to discredit the Islamic discourse that holds that only resistance can force the occupation army to leave. But such an argument remains weak when faced with the reality that the agreements have been unable to bring an end to occupation or an improvement in daily life.

The attitude of the Palestinian National Authority toward the Islamists has evolved considerably since Yasir Arafat's "return" to Gaza in July 1994 and the confrontations between the authority and Islamists in Gaza in November 1994. This evolution is the work of one man who is deciding on his own the strategy to develop, and this man has undoubtedly moved from a position of firmness toward a more conciliatory stance.

As long as it has not ended the occupation, the Palestinian National Authority will find it difficult to legitimize a policy of suppressing a movement fighting precisely that occupation.

Within weeks of its deployment, the Palestinian police proceeded to arrest militant Islamists and outlawed in mosques all activities considered to be political propaganda. Throughout the intifada years, mosques had been safe areas from which resistance was organized. The Palestinian National Authority's decision was interpreted by the Islamists as an attempt by the authority to take control of the mosques and reclaim religious institutions in order to equip the authority with an "official Islam" similar to that of other Arab regimes.

Arafat may well have been tempted by such a thought. That he does not enjoy any support among the religious and that the existing religious institutions are under Jordan's control are taken as weaknesses. Armed with an exclusively nationalist ideology, Arafat is discovering that the PLO has remained relatively protected from the Islamist wave. Palestinian society, however, has been largely conquered by the religious tide, creating an additional handicap for a political leadership that remained in exile for a long time and that consequently has been unable to adapt progressively to the evolution of society. Here, as in other parts of the Arab world, democratization means obliged partnership with the Islamists.

BRINGING HAMAS INTO THE PROCESS

On his "return" to Palestine, Arafat did not seem willing to put new strength into his own movement. Did he fear that he would be confronted by a movement possessing its own dynamic and capable of resisting him? Or was he convinced that the peace agreements would be sufficient to establish his popularity? In any event, he had done nothing to favor the reemergence of his mainstream Fatah faction of the PLO until the November 1994 Gaza confrontations. Only then, feeling more powerless in the face of Hamas, did Arafat attempt to mobilize Fatah with the purpose of using it as "protection screen" for the Palestinian National Authority. But the timing and the method employed (a hasty organization of a raucous demonstration in support of Arafat's authority) do not suggest that Arafat intends to create an efficient counterweight to the Islamist movement. Instead, it suggests that Arafat wants to turn his political formation into an instrumental device. Each appointment to the various positions in the National Authority reflects the classical co-optation strategy practiced by many Arab regimes and leaves one thinking that Arafat does not suffi-

ciently trust Fatah anymore to rework it into a party on which his power could rest.

Yet it is precisely the weakening of Fatah and its identification with the National Authority that strengthens Hamas. In merging the PLO into the structures of the National Authority, Arafat is denying himself the instruments of struggle against the Islamists and is locking himself into a confrontation with them. He thus leaves the population with a choice between the National Authority and Hamas.

Confronted by the Islamists, Arafat is ill-equipped to implement the type of strategy he used to employ toward the radical factions within the PLO. Unlike the latter, the Islamist movement is not born of the PLO. Its origins lie elsewhere and it feels no moral or political obligation to support a strategy it did not design. Because of this, Arafat cannot use the same financial or political pressures that he wielded in dealing with the PLO factions. Arafat's primary objective is to lure the Islamist movement into any kind of common forum with the Palestinian National Authority so as to engage in negotiations, bargaining, and compromises.

Since Hamas has said it will participate in elections, this may lead the way, Arafat hopes, to the co-optation of part of the Islamists (as long as they are legislative elections). Holding legislative elections would be especially significant because they would introduce a check on the power of the National Authority, enabling the Palestinians to truly govern themselves without having to constantly refer to Israel. If, however, elections only establish an executive council, all legislation adopted by the council would have to be submitted to the approval of the Israeli-Palestinian committee, which would not create a proper mechanism for the legitimation of the Palestinian power.

TOWARD A PARTNERSHIP?

Did Arafat miss the opportunity before the Oslo agreements to integrate Hamas into the PLO and thus control it? It is true that the Islamists' requirements were very ambitious, but their integration, even under their own conditions, could have contributed to reinforcing the central authority and preserving an unchallenged legitimacy.

The priority of concluding an agreement rather than "consensus building" within the Palestinian ranks has led to Arafat confronting not an opposition to his power but a political force that is imposing itself as an effective partner and that shares Palestinian legitimacy with the PLO.

It is therefore in terms of a dialogue between two partners that the Palestinian National Authority must deal with Hamas. The latter is presenting itself as relatively conciliatory and is inviting the PNA to reach an agreement on press freedom, for example. Hamas is nevertheless making it clear what issues cannot be trampled upon, such as the Islamist fighters' refusal to disarm or the preservation of the mosques as sanctuaries for Islamic actions.

On his side, Arafat is making several gestures to the Islamists while asking at the same time for something in exchange. He has retracted his call for Hamas to disarm its fighters and, in exchange, is obtaining a promise of a truce in the hunt for collaborationists. He is attempting to obtain the release of Sheik Yassin (whose moderate declarations he appreciates) from the Israeli government, proposing to the Islamists in exchange a handover of the Palestinian spy Adnan Yassin.

There nevertheless exists another difficulty that stems from the fact that the Palestinian Islamists are, without a doubt, the least religious and the most political Islamists in the region. The usual compromise that a number of Arab regimes have more or less implicitly achieved with their Islamists—consisting in the state giving up all or part of the social field in exchange for the Islamists' removal from the formal political field—is more difficult to reach with a national liberation movement. Not that such a compromise is impossible; if the peace process were to take a positive turn, it would constitute grounds for Islamist withdrawal. In the meantime, any concession by the Palestinian National Authority is a gain for the Islamists.

For now, the Islamists and the National Authority seem to agree on one point: that it is necessary to hold elections. But for each the motivations are different. Hamas hopes elections will bring the emergence of an authority that would be a new source of legitimacy in the exercise of power, thereby eliminating the role of the PLO in this field

(this also explains its insistence on holding legislative elections). As for Arafat, he sees elections as the means to ground his authority and to reclaim legitimacy--insofar as polls indicate that he will keep his job as president of the elected authority no matter what the composition of the assembly turns out to be.¹

In any event, the Palestinian National Authority favors elections because it hopes they will help limit violence.

It remains to be seen if the Islamists are ready to fully play the game of legality (even if the definition of legality is somewhat particular in the present Palestinian context) by creating a true political party.

HAMAS AS THE LOYAL OPPOSITION

The relationship between the Palestinian National Authority and the Islamist movement is characterized primarily by its total enmeshment into the peace process and relations with Israel. Nonetheless, one must not conclude that only Israeli pressures are causing Arafat to try to break up the Islamist movement. It is not unlikely that the leader of the PNA has tried to do so on his own in order to regain the monopoly of Palestinian legitimacy. Maybe he would have chosen another time to do so if he had not been subjected to the outside pressures we have mentioned. It remains that the partnership was not necessarily the formula that Arafat had in mind for his relationship with the Islamist movement. Nonetheless, the monopoly of legitimacy is no more accepted among Palestinians than it is in neighboring Arab countries.

None, however, have yet accepted the proposition that there is no strong legitimacy of power without the existence of a real opposition; it is the existence of a credible opposition movement that becomes in and of itself a factor of legitimation of power. The leader of the Palestinian National Authority must still provide proof that he understands and accepts this reality. This entails full recognition of the Islamist movement as a loyal, "patriotic," and responsible opposition movement, capable of becoming a partner in the difficult process of building the Palestinian entity so that the transition period at last delivers independence. ■

¹Opinion polls conducted by the Center for Palestine Research and Studies of Nablus indicate that despite a noticeable fall in his popularity during 1995 (55.4 percent in May, 49.3 in July), Arafat remains by far the most popular personality in the territories.

"In a region where words do not come cheap, the multilateral negotiations have made significant contributions to the Middle East peace process. More important, they have helped build a foundation on which future gains are not only possible but likely."

Behind the Headlines: The Multilateral Middle East Talks

ROBERT J. BOOKMILLER AND KIRSTEN NAKJAVANI BOOKMILLER

In the fall of 1991, President George Bush and his secretary of state, James Baker, devised a three-tier structure of negotiations to foster a comprehensive peace for the Middle East. The first phase of what became known as the "Madrid Framework" called for an international conference that would gather together in an unprecedented meeting Israel and its four immediate Arab neighbors—Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and the Palestinians—under the auspices of the United States and the Soviet Union. After the conference, two simultaneous negotiating tracks would commence. Bilateral rounds involving combinations of the five parties would address the highly sensitive issues of security and land; the sponsors of the Madrid Framework hoped that discussions of these issues would lead to final peace agreements. Multilateral talks, open to the bilateral delegations, other Middle Eastern and North African states plus interested extraregional countries and organizations, would tackle regionwide concerns.

The October 1991 Madrid Middle East Peace Conference attracted worldwide attention, as did the bilateral talks that were inaugurated in Washington just a few weeks after the conference. Yet the multilateral negotiations, whose participants have met on a regular basis since early 1992, have eluded the public eye. While overshadowed by Madrid and the history-making bilateral peace accords involving the Palestine Liberation Organization, Israel, and Jordan, the multilateral talks are a vital part of the entire Middle East peace process.

They buttress the bilateral negotiations, generate fresh diplomatic opportunities that were not part of the original framework, and have established several permanent institutions that will allow multilateral governance to continue if a regionwide peace takes hold.

THE TIES THAT BIND

In addressing the first steering committee meeting of the multilateral talks in Moscow in January 1992, Secretary of State Baker described the philosophy behind the gathering: "Despite the political issues that currently divide governments and peoples... there are real ties that bind the peoples of the Middle East together. For after all, they drink the same water, they breathe the same air, are vulnerable to the same diseases, and have all suffered from the very tragic costs of war." The cosponsors of the meeting, the United States and Russia, identified five areas integral to enhancing the well-being of the region's inhabitants: refugees; economic development and cooperation; the environment; water; and arms control.

These issues highlight the importance of the multilateral talks. The five areas under discussion overlap a large number of political boundaries and therefore require the involvement of a wider array of participants than found in the bilateral talks; in "opening up" the meetings to the region, a broader grid of stability is put into place. Moreover, multilateral achievements, including aid to Palestinian refugees, job creation, and improvement of the quality and amount of drinking water, have brought immediate and tangible relief to the people of the Middle East.

The actual conferees also assume a different personality than that found at the bilateral talks. Here academics and other authorities constitute a signif-

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icant number of the delegations, since finding solutions to the problems they are addressing requires highly specialized and technical know-how. These professionals build bridges that span the Arab-Israeli divide, and will ultimately encourage their political leaders to do the same. United States Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Edward Djerejian referred to this process in 1993 as the "bottom-up approach," with "the technicians telling the politicians that it is not only possible but necessary to work with old adversaries."

WHO CAME AND WHO DIDN'T

The multilateral talks consist of five working groups created to correspond to each matter under discussion; a steering committee, cochaired by the United States and Russia, was formed to guide and monitor the talks. The working groups and steering committee hold biannual plenary sessions that are supplemented by intersessional meetings, workshops, and field trips. More than 40 states and organizations have taken part so far, including 10 Arab countries, such as Morocco and Saudi Arabia, that are not currently involved in the bilateral rounds. The direct participation of the 10 Arab states is highly significant, given that they have no formal diplomatic relations with Israel, and thus by joining have extended tacit recognition to it.

Noticeably absent, however, are Syria and Lebanon, who have conditioned their entrance on substantial progress in the bilateral negotiations. Until Israel agrees to return the Golan Heights to Syria and withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon, Damascus and Beirut view contacts with Israel at the multilateral level as premature normalization. Three other states that the United States considers "outside of the community of nations"—Iran, Iraq, and Libya—were not invited.

The Palestinians posed a slightly different challenge when it came to the issue of diplomatic representation. Before the Madrid conference Israel had secured a promise from the United States and Russia that only West Bank and Gaza Strip residents would take part in the bilaterals. Denied access were Palestinians from East Jerusalem, the Palestinian diaspora, and the PLO. However, the Palestinians involved in the multilateral negotiations made the argument—accepted by the cosponsors—that since these negotiations involved broader issues and the ultimate shape of Middle East peace, Palestinian participation should not be limited solely to residents of the occupied territories.

When diaspora Palestinians appeared at the first meetings of the Refugee and Economic groupings in May 1992, Israel balked at attending. Intervention by the United States and Egypt, as well as a change in Israel's government to the more conciliatory Labor Party, finally resolved this matter in late 1992. Initial Israeli resistance to any Palestinian presence at the Arms Control and Regional Security discussions—on the grounds that only countries should be invited—was also settled by fall 1992 in favor of the Palestinian delegation.

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVES

The Refugee Working Group, chaired by Canada, has been one of the most contentious of the multilaterals. At the heart of the debate are the estimated 3 million displaced Palestinians living outside Israel and the occupied territories. Tensions within the group stem partly from the issue of which Palestinians could participate. Syria's and Lebanon's boycott, despite the presence of more than 350,000 Palestinians within their borders, remains a constant weak spot. The Palestinian representation controversy also initially marred negotiations, with Israel displaying its unhappiness with the expanded Palestinian presence by boycotting the group. However, when Israel did return to the talks in November 1992, it was the first time since 1949 that it agreed to discuss the question of displaced Palestinians.

Another sticking point is the definition of the problem. While Palestinians demand repatriation—including the right of return for those who left in 1948 when Israel was created—Israel stresses the humanitarian rather than the political dimension of the issue. It prefers to focus on living conditions in the refugees' present locations instead of relocation to what is now Israel or Israeli-controlled lands. Therefore early multilateral rounds have concentrated on job creation and training, public health, and child welfare. Despite initial Israeli objections, the topic of family reunification has also been added to the agenda.

These limitations notwithstanding, the working group sparked a peace process development far larger than the issue of refugees. In late 1992, the group commissioned the Norwegian Institute for Applied Social Science (FAFO) to conduct a study of living conditions in the occupied territories. This extensive socioeconomic report surveyed 2,500 Palestinians and explored topics ranging from employment and housing to economic resources and education.

During the research stage, the Norwegian government became actively involved in the broader Palestinian-Israeli conflict. FAFO Director-General Terje Larsen, the study's lead author, Marianne Heiberg, and Heiberg's husband, Norwegian Foreign Minister Johan Jorgen Holst, initiated secret contacts between Israel and the PLO. These talks ultimately led to the September 1993 Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles.

This accord, along with the October 1994 Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty, helped make significant headway in the refugee sphere. Most of these advancements, however, have fallen outside the parameters of the actual working group. The steering committee has organized several "donor conferences" at which members of the international community have pledged substantial resources to carry out projects in the refugee communities and within the new Palestinian National Authority installed in Gaza and the West Bank. The Declaration of Principles created a quadripartite committee of Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian, and Egyptian negotiators to confer on the return of Palestinians displaced during the 1967 War. This joint committee met for the first time in March 1995. While supplanting the efforts of the working group, the committee may ultimately replace the body with more permanent multilateral structures. Other classifications of displaced Palestinians will be reviewed under the provisions of the Israeli-Jordanian agreement; talks concerning the more emotional issue of the 1948 refugees are slated for 1996-1997.

RESTORING FINANCIAL FLOWS

As the Economic Development and Cooperation Working Group began its work, both sides were intransigent. Israel wanted economic relations as a sign of good faith to launch the economic cooperation process while the Arab parties viewed them as part of normalization and expected the return of territory before they would lift their trade boycott of Israel. The Arab side also feared that once trade relations were in place, Israel's economic strength would make it a hegemonic power within the Middle East. The participants had therefore erected substantial roadblocks. Consequently, these multilateral negotiations also experienced a rocky start.

Success in the bilateral arena between Israel, Jordan, and the PLO broke the deadlock, and the

working group shifted into high gear. At a November 1993 meeting in Copenhagen, the parties agreed on an "action plan" comprised of 35 specific ventures. The undertakings ranged from communications to agriculture to investment and financial matters and included such projects as a feasibility study for joint Israeli-Egyptian-Jordanian highways and a project to link regional electricity grids. At a June 1994 meeting in Rabat, Morocco, the participants established a monitoring committee to advance the agenda agreed to in Copenhagen. This body was responsible for promoting the free movement of peoples, goods, services, capital, and information in the Middle East. Even more important, the Rabat conferees made arrangements for an economic summit—in the spirit of the multilateral process, but not a formal round—to be held in Casablanca in October 1994.

A number of positive developments took place before the Casablanca summit. In September the Gulf Cooperation Council, headed by Saudi Arabia, announced that its members would no longer observe the indirect aspects of the Arab League embargo that forbade contracts with companies doing business with Israel. Jordan and Israel also signed their peace treaty days before the meeting. Thus the political atmosphere surrounding the Casablanca talks ushered in a new period of economic and trade opportunities.

At an October 1995 summit in Amman, the conferees announced plans for a Middle East Development Bank. To be housed in Cairo, this bank is expected to have \$5 billion in total capital. Two other announcements made the Amman conference noteworthy: Israel and Qatar said they had signed a \$2 billion natural gas deal, and the parties agreed to restructure the Economic Development and Cooperation Working Group into a permanent institution to be headquartered in Jordan.

The group's chair, the European Union (EU), is pleased with this institutional evolution. Referring to their own historical experience as a blueprint, the Europeans advocate a regional common market that would progressively lead to formal and highly interdependent trade and financial links among the countries of the Middle East. At Casablanca, for example, EU President Jacques DeLors reiterated his call for the establishment of a Water, Energy and Infrastructure Community for the area, based on the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) model. Set up in 1951, the

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ECSC launched the European common market and eventually the EU itself.

ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENT

The Working Group on the Environment, held under Japanese auspices, has been the least controversial of the five multilateral groups. It confronts problems that fall predominantly in the scientific and technical realm—such as pollution and desertification—where the need for multilateral solutions is most apparent. Furthermore, Israel and other Middle Eastern states were already parties to a Mediterranean environmental framework. Although the Arab countries meticulously avoided direct Israeli contact within that process, broad cooperation existed nonetheless. The Madrid multilaterals presented a fresh opportunity to encourage even closer environmental cooperation.

In May 1993, the parties identified clusters of issues, such as environmental awareness, desertification, sea pollution, and sewage waste disposal, that required attention and assembled committees to discuss each cluster. The first solid breakthrough came in November 1993 when Israel and Jordan agreed to cooperate on pollution and oil spills in the Gulf of Aqaba, as well as management of the Gulf's picturesque coral reef. This accord was later expanded to include Egypt and is being underwritten financially by the EU.

There has been progress since then on a number of fronts. In early 1994 the multilateral participants solicited and received from the World Bank the funding for a project to attack the desertification problem. In October 1994, an Environmental Code of Good Conduct and Cooperation was adopted unanimously at a meeting in Bahrain. Each state pledged to follow development policies designed to protect the environment of adjacent countries. At a June 1995 gathering in Amman, discussions centered on waste water and hazardous materials and plans to construct a permanent environmental research center, perhaps in Jordan or Bahrain.

The one point of contention in the environmental meetings has been a long-running feud between Egypt and Israel over the latter's nuclear activities. Cairo maintains that Israel's nuclear program and its disposal of radioactive material threaten the Sinai and other surrounding areas and wants these activities supervised by the Environment dialogue. Israel believes Egypt is simply looking for a way to examine its nuclear program and wants the matter

reserved for the Arms Control Working Group; this issue is still unresolved.

CONTROLLING THE REGION'S WATER

The uneven distribution and overall scarcity of water in the Middle East make it a highly sensitive security concern. Consequently, the Working Group on Water, under the direction of the United States, faced numerous difficulties at the outset. Israel initially favored a focus on technical matters, such as resource management, while the Palestinians and the Arab states wanted to negotiate water shares and rights. Israel resisted this agenda and contended that such rights were security questions that should be discussed in bilateral talks. The Syrian boycott further complicates comprehensive diplomatic efforts in this field; Syria's absence hinders discussion on basinwide cooperation on the Jordan and Yarmouk Rivers, in which Damascus would be a major player.

Early deliberations in 1992 and 1993 were devoted to confidence-building measures and technical seminars. Later, the negotiations assumed a different cast as they became a vehicle to assist progress already made on water in the bilateral talks involving Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians. Considerable space, for example, was devoted to this concern in the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty. Jordan's downstream location on the Jordan and Yarmouk Rivers allows Israel and Syria to control what eventually reaches the country. Under the terms of the treaty, Israel agreed to allow more water to travel to Jordan as well as to store water in the rainy winter months and channel it to the kingdom during the dry summer period.

The water problems facing the Palestinians and Israelis are even more intertwined. Because Israel relies heavily on underground water sources in the West Bank, discussions hinge not only on sovereignty over the land itself but control over what lies beneath it. While Israel finally recognized in the September 1995 interim accord with the PLO that the Palestinians possess water rights, the text leaves a definition of these privileges for later negotiations. Yet the multilateral talks have launched a number of projects to assist Israel and the Palestinians in making difficult choices.

In the broader perspective, the multilaterals have endorsed a number of plans to develop regional water data banks, to overhaul municipal systems, and to build a desalination research and technology center in Oman. While a variety of seminars and workshops have been held, many of

the larger projects are still awaiting financing. Since the control of water also directly involves security concerns, further advances hinge on developments in the larger peace process.

THE ARMS CONTROL AGENDA

Given that the post-Persian Gulf War Middle East remains the world's largest arms importer and that the region's countries possess not only conventional systems but also chemical, biological, and—in the case of Israel—nuclear capabilities, the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group confronts the toughest task of all the multilateral groups. To succeed it must overcome decades of military conflict and suspicion and convince its participants that cooperation in arms limitation does more good than harm.

The conferees initially concentrated on familiarizing themselves with arms control measures. Seminars were held at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to observe how military information is exchanged. Confidence building was also a major goal of the initial gatherings and there have been a number of achievements in this area. In May 1993 the countries involved agreed to explore cooperation in air-sea searches, crisis communications, prenotification of military troop movements, and the exchange of information regarding defense budgets. They also agreed to establish a regional communications system tied to the OSCE network. Regional conflict prevention centers are planned for Tunisia, Jordan, and Qatar. Their objectives will be crisis prevention, management, and resolution.

Yet the working group faces serious obstacles. The Arab countries (especially Egypt) want to link Israel's unacknowledged nuclear program to any reduction in conventional and nonconventional arms. Since 1974, Egypt has advocated a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East and has refused to sign chemical weapons pacts until Israel agrees to curb its nuclear weapons program. Israel maintains that until the entire region is part of a comprehensive peace and arms control regime, the fear of nuclear reprisal is a deterrent. Tel Aviv is unwilling to give up.

This disagreement between Israel and Egypt spilled out of the multilateral grouping and into the United Nations throughout 1994 and 1995 as the international community addressed the extension of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Egypt and most Middle Eastern states have signed the original document; Israel has not. During the

negotiations on the NPT's extension, Cairo tried to link its own future adherence to the NPT with an Israeli agreement to join the treaty, a position from which it ultimately backed down under United States pressure in May 1995.

This dispute seriously paralyzed the working group. Attempts to devise a statement of principles to guide arms control and regional security measures have failed at the plenary sessions since 1994. In fact, the multilateral negotiations have essentially been reduced to the smaller intersessional meetings, the last one held in September 1995. However, with Syria's boycott and the absence at the multilateral talks of a number of the region's key military powers, including Iraq and Iran, a truly inclusive arms control regime may be impossible at this time.

TOWARD A NEW MIDDLE EAST?

Unprecedented talks on the repatriation of Palestinian refugees to their homeland; unexpected twists leading to a remarkable accord between Israel and the PLO; regionwide trade and foreign investment opportunities unheard of only five years ago; Jordan's multifold increase in its water supply; high-level Arab and Israeli delegations attempting to reduce deeply rooted security fears—these are all signs of what Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres is fond of calling the “New Middle East.” Breaking the taboos of the “old” Middle East are the result of the constant and reinforcing interplay between the bilateral and multilateral negotiating tracks Madrid launched in 1991.

Some vestiges of the old order hang on stubbornly. Lack of progress in the Syrian-Israeli negotiations have affected Israel's relations with some important Gulf states. The Saudis have slowed down the speed of normalization in deference to Syria. In addition, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have refused to host multilateral meetings (despite the fact that Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain have) and the Saudis oppose multilateral talks or institutions headquartered in Israel.

Yet in a region where words do not come cheap, the multilateral negotiations have made significant contributions to the Middle East peace process. More important, they have helped build a foundation on which future gains are not only possible but likely. As Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Djerejian has noted, “Early on, it was evident that for most participants the multilaterals were seen as a “win/win” situation. All could gain, and all have.” ■

"Ambition, Islamic or Marxist, long ago lost its charm for most Afghans, who seek only a chance to rebuild what was destroyed. Whether they will have that chance any time soon is unclear."

The Afghan Morass

THOMAS BARFIELD

The continuing turmoil in Afghanistan, and the many surprising turns the conflict has taken, have made fools of most policy analysts. Leaders with opposing ideological positions have allied, broken, and allied again with former enemies. Factions that were judged strong and secure have suddenly collapsed, often without fighting, while movements with no clear history or leadership have overrun large territories and then lost them. Part of the problem has been attempts at single-faceted explanations of a multifaceted country, where leadership is more personal than ideological, where self-interest and power seeking drive events, and where alliances are short but memories are long. All this is made even more complex by the country's regional, sectarian, and ethnic faultlines.

THE CROSSROADS OF ASIA

Afghanistan, which is about the size of France, is divided north and south by the Hindu Kush and Pamir mountain ranges. Before the Soviet invasion of 1979 it had an estimated population of 15 million people, practically all Muslims, most of whom were Sunni. The capital, Kabul, was home to the country's largest urban population and the center of national politics. Because all government officials were centrally appointed, regionally important cities such as Herat in the west, Kandahar in the south, and Mazar-i-Sharif in the north had little autonomy. Integration between local and national institutions was poor. This was in part because of geographical difficulties (the country's single all-seasons paved road was not completed until the mid-1960s), low levels of literacy (less

than 10 percent), and because regional tribal and ethnic identities had never been supplanted by any overarching national identity or ideology. Indeed, even the national ethnic labels hid a range of diversity at the local level, where organization was based on kinship groups and regional communities.

The ethnic and linguistic complexity of Afghanistan's population is the result of its position as a "crossroads of Asia." For centuries Afghanistan was overrun by peoples and armies moving out of Central Eurasia toward India and Iran; it was also the route through which trade and ideas moved from Iran or India into Central Asia. Often part of larger empires, the populations of almost all of Afghanistan's ethnic groups extend well into neighboring states.

The area south of the Hindu Kush has historically been closely linked to the Indian subcontinent; it is the home of the 5 million to 6 million Pashtuns (also called Pathans in Pakistan) who make up about 40 percent of the population. The tribally organized Pashtuns have been the dominant political force in the country, with an exclusive hold on political leadership through members of a dynasty who were only displaced by a communist coup in 1978.

The area north of the Hindu Kush, historically a zone of conflict between Afghanistan and Central Asia, was home to perhaps a million or more Turkish-speaking Uzbeks and Turkmen in northwest Afghanistan, extensions of ethnic groups that now dominate adjacent Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The northeastern zone was the center of the Tajik population; these Persian-speaking Sunni Muslims made up the bulk of Kabul's population and dominated the mountainous regions to the north extending into Tajikistan and parts of Uzbekistan. The 3 million to 4 million Afghan Tajiks constituted 30 percent of the population and were particularly important because Persian was both the lingua franca of Afghanistan and the language of

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government. If the Pashtuns dominated the leadership positions, it was the Tajiks who ran the bureaucracy.

The western part of Afghanistan was also Persian speaking, but had closer cultural and economic links to Iran, which had controlled the territory until the Afghan conquest of Herat in the eighteenth century. Iran also maintained ties to the scattered Shiite Muslim populations of Afghanistan, who often faced discrimination at the hands of Sunni governments. The Hazara people, Persian-speaking Shiites, constituted the largest such group. Numbering somewhat less than a million people, the Hazara inhabited many of the remote mountain valleys of the central Hindu Kush; they also made up about one-third of Kabul's population before the war. They had especially poor relations with the Pashtuns, who had conquered central Afghanistan in the late nineteenth century.

OTHER PEOPLE'S WARS

The international politics of Afghanistan has been as complex as its population. It was here, in what the British melodramatically called the "cockpit of Asia," that the colonial empires of czarist Russia and British India bumped against one another during the nineteenth century. Serving as a buffer state, Afghanistan was able to preserve its autonomy and begin a tradition of playing powerful rivals off against one another for its own benefit. This policy was effective in part because of the skill of its rulers: despite pro-German leanings Afghanistan remained profitably neutral in both world wars, and during the cold war it effectively adapted its old strategy to the world's new superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, to acquire considerable military and economic aid. However, since successive Afghan governments feared foreign domination, they refused to open the country to economic development.

By the 1960s and 1970s, with the help of considerable foreign aid, the pace of change had quickened. In a cold war battle for influence the United States and the Soviet Union together poured almost a billion dollars of aid into the country, each eager to prevent the other from gaining control. The Russians trained and equipped the military, built the north-south roads, and constructed grain silos; the Americans trained the bureaucracy, built the east-west roads, and supplied the wheat to fill the silos. But this development also served to convince many newly educated (and often unemployed) Afghans that

the old ruling dynasty had become an obstacle to change. A coup toppled King Zahir Shah in 1973, but the republic that replaced him, led by his cousin, brother-in-law, and former prime minister, Mohammed Daoud, made no major changes. Leaders of the small communist parties in Kabul united as the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and staged a coup in April 1978, murdered Daoud, and promised wholesale changes.

These changes included breaking the country's long tradition of neutrality in favor of a direct alliance with the Soviet Union. Domestically the government planned a social revolution based on massive land reform, abolition of marriage payments, reduction of rural debts, and a secular government. Designed to win popular support, the reforms were instead met first with suspicion and then with rural resistance. Conservatives charged that the policies were un-Islamic and threatened the country's social structure. The government responded with force and fighting broke out. Meanwhile the communists themselves were badly divided between two factions: the largely Pashtun Khalq (strongest in the military) and the mainly Tajik Parcham (strongest in the bureaucracy). Nur Mohammed Taraki, the first Khalq leader, was soon assassinated by the Parcham leader Hafizullah Amin, who seized power and purged his rivals. Seeing the regime in disarray and threatened with collapse by its internal bickering and an uncoordinated but growing resistance, the Soviet Union chose to intervene directly in December 1979. Soviet troops murdered Hafizullah Amin and installed a former Parcham leader, Babrak Karmal.

The Soviet invasion immediately changed the character of the war. Citing the Brezhnev Doctrine, which declared a country that had entered the socialist bloc could not be allowed to leave, Moscow claimed it had a vital interest in keeping the PDPA in power. What had been a backwater affair entered the center stage of world politics. The invasion was the first direct use of Soviet troops to occupy a formerly nonaligned state since World War II. The international condemnation of the Soviet Union was overwhelming. Some in the West feared Russia was on the march again, seeking warm water ports or threatening Persian Gulf oil fields. The large bloc of nonaligned states (especially in the Islamic world) objected more generally to the gross violation of Afghanistan's sovereignty. The United States decided to make holding Afghanistan as costly as possible without direct intervention.

Within Afghanistan itself the war increased in savagery and firepower as the Soviet Union attempted to put an end to opposition over the next 10 years. Four million to five million refugees fled to the safety of camps in Pakistan and Iran. Internal refugee movements tripled the size of Kabul to 1.5 million people. As many as a million Afghans died as a consequence of the fighting.

Resistance to communist regime coalesced around a set of traditionalist parties composed largely of secular nationalists, monarchists, and tribal elites, and a set of Islamic parties, many of whose leaders had long been in exile in Pakistan. Neither set had a high level of support within Afghanistan before the war, but the Islamic parties had two advantages. First, in a society so divided by region, tribe, and ethnic group, the call for Islamic unity and jihad, or holy war, to force an atheist invader from Afghan soil had great resonance. Resistance fighters became known generically as mujahedeen, or holy warriors. Second, their location in Pakistan and connections to the outside world gave them an advantage in acquiring the resources that would be needed to fight the war. Thus when the United States and conservative Arab states such as Saudi Arabia began to pour billions of dollars into the effort to support a proxy war with the Soviet Union, the Islamic parties had access to money and weapons that soon made them the main players in the resistance.

At the beginning of the war resistance factions split constantly from one another until there were seven recognized parties based in Pakistan. These seven did not include a number of Shiite resistance groups supported by Iran with whom the Sunni parties in Pakistan refused to cooperate. Despite attempts to create a unified front, the parties argued among themselves and refused to coordinate their efforts. Indeed, they often appeared only slightly less hostile to one another than to the Kabul regime. The two most important Islamist parties were the predominately Pashtun Hezb-i-Islami (Islamic Party) led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and the mainly Tajik Jamiat-i-Islami (Islamic Society) of Burhanuddin Rabbani. Independent groups fighting inside the country were refused direct aid by Pakistan and the United States unless they became part of one the recognized parties based in Pakistan. Many of the commanders actually doing the fighting in Afghanistan resented their dependency on the "seven emirs"

who sat safely in Pakistan while they took on the Soviet troops. There was also a strong belief that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) favored Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami in allocating aid with an eye to control of a future Afghan government.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME

The war in Afghanistan became stalemated within a few years of the Soviet invasion. Despite air bombardments, widespread use of landmines, search and destroy sweeps, and the depopulation of much of the countryside, Soviet forces were unable to dislodge the resistance. They were also disappointed in the refusal by the Kabul regime's troops to take the offensive; indeed, regime troops and mujahedeen often established cease-fire zones. Through this period, however, the mujahedeen grew more sophisticated in their use of weapons and tactics; this was especially true after the guerrillas were provided with Stinger antiaircraft missiles in 1986, a weapon that greatly reduced Soviet air superiority on the battlefield. Soviet casualties grew (Soviet authorities eventually acknowledged that at least 15,000 troops were killed in Afghanistan); the financial cost of the war to the Soviet Union has been estimated by Western experts at \$5 billion annually.

After Mikhail Gorbachev took power in 1985, Moscow began to change its policy toward Afghanistan, which eventually led to the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989 under a United Nations-sponsored agreement. After the Soviet withdrawal, both the United States and the Soviet Union supplied their clients with enough stockpiles of equipment and ammunition to keep fighting for years to come. However, most observers assumed that this was no real threat to peace because once the Soviets left the mujahedeen would overrun government outposts, take regional cities, and then march on Kabul in triumph in a matter of months, if not weeks. But the mujahedeen proved particularly ill suited to this task, lacking an overall strategy, unwilling to cooperate, and inexperienced in battles that required taking fixed, heavily defended positions.

The PDPA's leader at the time of the Soviet pull-out, Najibullah (who had been installed by the Soviets to replace the feckless Karmal in 1986), also proved surprisingly successful in keeping his troops together, maintaining support based not on ideology but on the money, weapons, and food he could deploy. Nevertheless, with the disintegration

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of the Soviet Union, the PDPA regime realized its time was limited. Former communists scrambled to cut deals and join with the very Islamist factions they had fought for years. This endgame began when General Abdul Rashid Doestam, the commander of a much-feared Uzbek militia guarding a key approach to Kabul, defected from the PDPA and allied himself with the mujahedeen commander Ahmad Shah Masud, a Tajik from the Panjshir Valley north of Kabul. Masud, whose troops surrounded much of the capital, was one of the most renowned resistance commanders to emerge during the war, having survived numerous Soviet attacks on him. His forces, attached to Rabbini's Jamiat-i-Islami, already controlled much of northeastern Afghanistan. Another Jamiat commander, Ishmail Khan, dominated the Herat in the west after leading the mutiny of a division of the Afghan army. Together they formed the "Council of the North."

Thus, when Doestam defected the entire northern part of the country and its vital road connection to Central Asia were no longer under government control, and without Doestam's troops and heavy equipment, Kabul did not have a viable defense. Rather than face an attack it was now sure to lose, the communist regime quickly ceded Kabul to Doestam's and Masud's troops in April 1992. Najibullah then sought asylum from the UN and disappeared from view. Thus the communist regime was less defeated militarily than reorganized as its components defected to various mujahedeen factions. One war was over, but another was to begin.

THE POSTWAR WAR

Many were hopeful that with the fall of Kabul work would begin on the reconstruction of Afghanistan, the repatriation of refugees, and the installation of an elected government. Surely all the factions could agree these were the country's most pressing problems. This proved wishful thinking. With the fall of Kabul the last thread that had unified the mujahedeen was gone. Each faction leader realized that if he did not obtain power now, he never would. And since the parties were based more on personality than on ideology, there was very little basis for compromise, since the rise of a predominant leader would mean an end to all the smaller factions. At the same time, old political divisions that had been suppressed in the name of jihad reemerged.

The Pashtuns had always dominated Afghani-

stan politically. Before the war they seemed to be the only group with a living military tradition, especially strong among the tribal groups along the Pakistan border. Yet throughout the war the Pashtuns had never formed a single movement. The Khalq, which ran the PDPA military, was Pashtun and even about a quarter of the "Tajik" Jamiat-i-Islami membership was Pashtun. In the Pashtun regions of the country, tribal structure was so fragmented that power rarely extended beyond a local region because of rivalries among neighbors. No "Council of the South" therefore ever emerged that could match the sophistication and territorial coverage of the "Council of the North." While Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami was predominately Pashtun, he himself had been born in the north and was of undistinguished lineage. His desire for personal power was also well known and many were suspicious of his close ties to Pakistan's military. More important, Pashtun tribes had historically opposed any form of centralized rule, whatever its ideology or ethnic composition. During the war power had devolved, and they would not be disposed to surrender it.

At the same time the war had dramatically shifted the balance of power among the different ethnic groups. Pashtuns who had settled in the north among Turks and Tajiks had left during the war to find safety in their old homelands of southern Afghanistan or in the refugee camps of Pakistan, which were located in predominately Pashtun areas. The Uzbeks, who had been nearly invisible in national politics before the war, now had their own militia and territory, and could count on at least covert support from newly independent Uzbekistan; based in Mazar-i-Sharif, their leader, Doestam, could change the balance of power in any factional fighting (as he had shown in betraying the PDPA). The fact that Doestam had supported the communists against the mujahedeen seems not to have been held against him. The Hazaras, armed by the Iranians, now controlled central Afghanistan and a number of key areas inside Kabul through the Hezb-i-Wahdat (Islamic Unity Party), led by Ali Mazari. The Tajiks in the northeast under Masud's skilled leadership had become the most cohesive and best organized mujahedeen faction, while Herat was the autonomous fiefdom of Ishmail Khan. The Tajik control of Kabul also gave them a preeminent position in establishing a new national government.

Just before Kabul fell the UN had put together a plan for a new government that included all the

major factions. This was reflected in the main division of power: Rabbani became president of Afghanistan, Masud the defense minister, and Hekmatyar prime minister. But this and all succeeding UN plans were based on the fallacy that the mujahedeen leaders wanted to cooperate and needed only a mechanism to do so. The political reality was that they wanted to displace one another. Thus "Prime Minister" Hekmatyar feared entering the capital and remained encamped on the hills south of Kabul from where he shelled the city and the troops of his "president," Rabbani. Kabul, which had been spared any fighting during the war because of its many lines of defenses, was devastated over the next three years. Much of the city's population, swollen with earlier refugees, fled; 25,000 are believed to have died as a result of the fighting. A stalemate ensued in which neither side was able to dislodge the other. In an attempt to break the deadlock, Hekmatyar cut a deal with Uzbek leader Doestam in January 1994, who once again betrayed his former allies to join with what he hoped would be the winning side. This odd couple, the most fundamentalist mujahedeen commander and the former communist general, failed to bring down Rabbani's government and the fighting in and around Kabul intensified.

THE TALIBAN FACTOR

Meanwhile, a new force was emerging in the south. In late 1994, a group of Pashtun Islamic students and their leaders, trained in Pakistan but now based in Kandahar, began to seize power from local warlords accused of criminal activity; they opened the region's roads to free transit and brought a high degree of order to the territories they took under their control. Proposing a more conservative Islamic state than the other parties, their small successes snowballed into a movement that took the established mujahedeen by surprise. Beginning with Kandahar, they quickly took control of almost all the Pashtun provinces in the south, often without fighting, as other factions joined them or simply fled. By March 1995 they were at the gates of Kabul. The Rabbani government did little to resist their move north, anticipating, correctly, that the Taliban were a greater danger to their rival Hekmatyar because they shared the same Pashtun base. Upon the arrival of the Taliban, Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami troops

quickly abandoned the positions from which they had shelled the capital for so long. Hekmatyar was suddenly reduced from major player to outsider, and the Taliban went after the capital. To gain a better tactical position, the fiercely Sunni Taliban briefly joined with the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat.

In facing Masud's government troops, however, the Taliban encountered two difficulties: they were now outside the ethnically Pashtun areas where they had their major support, and they were meeting determined opposition for the first time. In the ensuing battle the Taliban were driven from Kabul, but not before shelling the city as they withdrew, thereby shattering their reputation as a benevolent faction that sought to restore peace to Afghanistan. In their retreat they also captured and then killed Ali Mazari, the leader of the Hezb-i-Wahdat, earning the enmity of Iran and reinforcing old prejudices among the Hazaras that Pashtuns could not be trusted.

The Taliban came and went like a thunderstorm,

but they appeared to have left Rabbani's government in a stronger position. Kabul was now fully under government control and no longer in danger of attack. By the summer government troops were regaining control of the southwest and threatening to take Kandahar itself when, in a lightening strike in September, the Taliban seized Herat and all of western Afghanistan from Ishmail Khan.

The Afghan government accused Pakistan's ISI of organizing and fund-

ing this advance. To make the point more clearly, a mob in Kabul looted Pakistan's embassy and relations between the two countries deteriorated. While denying the charge of interference, Pakistan made clear its desire to see the regime in Kabul fall, labeling it "illegitimate."

In October the Taliban were once again at the gates of Kabul, determined to take it while they were still perceived as winners. The Taliban knew their best chance of success lay less in a military victory than in obtaining defections by key defenders. Alternatively, they could forge an alliance with the government's opponents and by sheer weight of opposition bring it down. However, their very success allowed the government to play the same card: the greater the Taliban advances, the more incentive there was for rivals like Doestam to support the government or remain neutral so that no one would win. Along

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with fierce fighting around Kabul, rumors of deals, defections, and complex double-crosses swirled about. In November Rabbani agreed to step down to create a UN-brokered coalition government in which power would be shared. The Taliban rejected this proposal and continued their attacks on the city, including air attacks with cluster bombs that caused large civilian casualties. While the war is likely to stalemate for the winter, the capture of Kabul by the Taliban, or the creation of a new coalition government, will not solve the country's real problems. Occupying an empty palace is only a step on the road to national power, not an end to the journey.

PRIDE GOES BEFORE THE FALL

The fighting in Afghanistan has marginalized the country. Practically no foreign powers have reestablished their embassies in Kabul. With no Soviet Union or cold war politics, Afghanistan has fallen off the American radar screen and become just another poor Central Asian state whose strategic value is problematic. Except for two belated concerns: the United States had armed and trained a number of Islamic groups (largely of non-Afghan origin) who remain intent on exporting holy war; and some of the factions it had supported had long maintained a robust trade in drugs and arms. For Russia, Afghanistan is a bitter legacy best ignored, although mujahedeen attacks on Russian-defended border posts in Tajikistan show that the country remains a problem.

Regionally, however, the case is quite different. For the first time in well over a century, Afghanistan has the potential to regain its status as a crossroads of Asia where South Asia and Central Asia, and the Iranian world and the Turkish world meet. Pakistan has been especially interested in seeing order restored to Afghanistan to facilitate transit to Central Asia, and Iran also sees northern Afghanistan as the most efficient transit route to that region. From the Central Asian perspective, Afghanistan offers access to ports and markets in Iran, Pakistan, and India. Perhaps even more important, Afghanistan could be the conduit for Central Asian oil and gas to South Asia and northwestern Iran, which could provide the largest amount of foreign income in the country's history.

At the same time neighboring countries have concerns about the consequences of continued disorder in Afghanistan. Both Pakistan and Iran would like to see the 3 million refugees still on their territories return home. Ethnic groups with

ties to each of Afghanistan's neighbors could also be a source of instability, either serving as homes to irredentist states that would threaten existing international boundaries or as the cause of international conflict should any of Afghanistan's neighbors attempt to partition the country with the excuse of protecting one or another ethnic group. Currently all the adjacent states seem agreed that a unified Afghanistan promotes a regional stability that outweighs any short-term gains that might accrue from partition.

But while the country has not been mobilized for fighting on the basis of ethnicity (labels more useful for identifying people than organizing them) or ideology (leaders switch sides too often), it is always a potential danger. Iran, for example, has complained that the Taliban have been forcing Shiites to flee their homes in territories they occupy. But if Afghanistan devolves to the point where no faction feels it can gain national power, then regional secession becomes more likely. Pakistan, with its eye on the large Pashtun south, seems most fascinated by this prospect, though if it ever came to pass, subsequent demands for a separate Pashtun state running from the Hindu Kush to the Indus River might easily lead Pakistan to rue the day it ventured to manipulate Afghan politics.

Inside Afghanistan there is a countervailing process to the sad story of continued civil war. Unlike the Soviet occupation period, the countryside and regional cities are largely at peace. When fighting does break out it tends to be confined to specific areas. The country is thus rebuilding from the bottom up despite general disorder. This should come as no surprise in an economy based largely on subsistence agriculture and pastoralism, where people have always assumed that the only sure help is self-help. Most Afghans are also sick of war and have little enthusiasm for any of the faction leaders or their desires for power, which is one of the reasons all the faction leaders find it hard to project power outside their home areas. The perennial proposal for the return of Zahir Shah as a figurehead monarch, a proposal that enrages mujahedeen factions, owes its longevity to the belief that the conflict cannot end until the top job is taken, so best give it to an old man who can do no harm. Ambition, Islamic or Marxist, long ago lost its charm for most Afghans, who seek only a chance to rebuild what was destroyed. Whether they will have that chance anytime soon is unclear. ■

BOOK REVIEWS

ON THE MIDDLE EAST

This Side of Peace: A Personal Account

By Hanan Ashrawi. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995. 318 pp., \$25.

Very few politicians, when given the chance to document their participation in a momentous political event, will discuss the importance of their family. Hanan Ashrawi does, which makes her autobiography, *This Side of Peace*, more than just another negotiator's account of the Israel-Palestinian peace talks. Beginning with her youth in a Christian Palestinian family in the West Bank through her resignation from the PLO in 1994, Ashrawi pulls personal stories, experiences, and thoughts into a fascinating narrative of both the Palestinian side of what were incredibly frustrating peace talks and what it meant for Ashrawi, as a woman, a Palestinian, an intellectual, and a mother, to be involved in them. The first half of the book, in which she lays her personal and political foundations, is the most effective and interesting segment; the latter half is an eye-opening look at what really occurred in the bilateral negotiations.

Melissa J. Sherman

Money Makes Us Relatives:

Women's Labor in Urban Turkey

By Jenny B. White. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994. 190 pp., \$30, cloth; \$12.95, paper.

It is not enough to describe women's piecework and family-workshop production in Turkey as a labor network: it is much more a complex web of familial and social relationships built around traditional gender roles. In her well-written *Money Makes Us Relatives*, Jenny White visits the squatter settlements where women provide cheap labor for export-oriented businesses and shows that these women, rather than being helplessly exploited, earn a degree of independence and monetary stability through their work. White uses varied sources, from case studies to cartoons, in this intelligent and unique examination of familial/business relations.

M.J.S.

Civil Society in the Middle East, Vol. II

Edited by Augustus Richard Norton. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995. 340 pp., \$120, cloth; \$35, paper.

This second installment of *Civil Society in the Middle East* is, like its predecessor, wide ranging in its approach, thorough in its examination, and lucid in its presentation. Volume II extends the regional coverage of the first volume with discussions of civil society in Turkey, Iran, Israel, Gaza, Yemen, and the Persian Gulf countries. The chapter on Sudan, which looks at civil society's destruction by the state, offers an approach to an aspect of civil society that merits further exploration of its occurrence in other parts of the world, such as Central America in the 1970s and 1980s.

William W. Finan, Jr.

Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran

By Parvin Paidar. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 401 pp., \$59.95.

Parvin Paidar begins by asserting the central importance of the position of women in Iran to its twentieth-century political discourses. She shows how throughout Iran's recent development women's roles in the family and the larger society have been key subjects of both modern and Islamic discourses. As the author chronicles the ways in which these discourses have attempted to shape the roles of women, an overall picture of the "evolving definition of women's subordination and emancipation" emerges in which nationalist concerns about Iran's relationship to the West and the quest for modernization repeatedly reinvent women's roles to accommodate and promote Iran's changing conceptions of itself as a modern Islamic state. The struggles of Iranian women to claim for themselves the task of reconstructing their place in society and the state's repeated rejections of these attempts are also examined. Paidar concludes by calling for a recognition of women's influence outside the formal structures more traditionally recognized in academic study.

Megan J. Breslin ■

THE MONTH IN REVIEW

November 1995

AFGHANISTAN

Nov. 11—The government reports that shelling by the Islamic Taliban militia killed 35 people and wounded 50 in Kabul; Taliban officials deny that they attacked the city.

ALGERIA

Nov. 27—Final results from the November 15 elections show that former General Liamine Zeroual has won the presidency with 61% of the vote; Zeroual was appointed president by the army in January 1994, 2 years after the government canceled parliamentary elections in which Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) candidates were winning; the FIS boycotted this month's election.

AZERBAIJAN

Nov. 14—International observers of the November 12 parliamentary elections held to fill a new 125-member parliament and approve a new constitution say that the elections were rigged by government leaders who disqualified many opposition candidates, stuffed ballot boxes in races in which they were losing, and inflated the voter turnout; official results have not yet been released.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Nov. 1—US-hosted peace talks between Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia (representing the Bosnian Serbs) officially open in Dayton, Ohio.
Nov. 21—In Dayton, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman initial a peace agreement; the agreement will take effect when it is formally signed in Paris in December. According to the agreement, Bosnia will remain a single state composed of a Bosnian Serb republic with 49% of the country's territory and a Bosnian Muslim-Croat federation with 51% of the territory. A central government with a parliamentary system will be installed in Sarajevo; no one indicted by the UN war-crimes tribunal will be allowed to hold office; NATO will deploy 60,000 troops from the US, France, Britain, and other countries to keep the peace.

BURMA

Nov. 23—Kuhn Sa, the leader of the Shan guerrillas and a reputed drug lord, announces that he is resigning as head of the guerrilla movement.

BURUNDI

Nov. 1—Officials report that more than 250 Hutu in northern Burundi were killed last week by soldiers from the Tutsi-dominated army.

CAMBODIA

Nov. 21—Former Foreign Minister Prince Norodom Sirivudh is jailed on charges that he had plotted to kill Prime Minister Hun Sen.

CHINA

Nov. 22—The government charges dissident Wei Jingsheng with trying to overthrow the government; Wei had been seized by

officials in 1994 while on parole after serving 14 1/2 years of a 15-year prison sentence for "counterrevolutionary activities."

Nov. 29—The government names 6-year-old Gyaincain Norbu the next Panchen Lama, the 2d-holiest Tibetan Buddhist leader; the exiled Tibetan Dalai Lama has already chosen another child for the position.

COLOMBIA

Nov. 6—Police arrest 4 suspects in the November 2 killing of Conservative Party leader and presidential candidate Alvaro Gómez Hurtado in Bogotá.

EGYPT

Nov. 13—In Geneva, Egyptian diplomat Ahmed Alaa Nazmi is assassinated; the previously unknown International Justice Group takes responsibility.
Nov. 23—A military court sentences 54 Islamic leaders who had been convicted of nonviolent offenses to prison terms of up to 5 years.

FRANCE

Nov. 4—Britain informs the government that it has detained Abdelkader Benouif, an Algerian Islamic militant suspected of involvement in a series of terrorist bombings in France that began in July.
Nov. 22—The government begins its 4th nuclear test on the Mururoa atoll in the South Pacific; President Jacques Chirac announces he may proceed with only 6 of the scheduled 8 tests; he denies that the cutback is linked to the worldwide protests against the testing.
Nov. 24—Train, subway, and bus workers strike to protest a government proposal to reduce social welfare benefits as part of a government austerity program.

GEORGIA

Nov. 5—Incomplete results from today's elections show that Eduard Shevardnadze has won the presidency with 70% of vote.
Nov. 15—Dzhaba Ioseliani, a former legislator and the leader of a paramilitary group, is arrested in connection with the August 29 assassination attempt on Shevardnadze.

GUATEMALA

Nov. 14—In presidential elections held November 12, Alvaro Arzú of the conservative Party for National Advancement has won 42% of the vote, a plurality but not enough to prevent a runoff election between Arzú and Alfonso Portillo of the right-wing Guatemalan Republican Front. The New Guatemala Democratic Front, a new left-wing coalition, wins 8 of 80 open legislative seats; a runoff will be held on January 7.

HAITI

Nov. 18—The *New York Times* reports that 7 people have been killed and 12 wounded in riots since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, speaking at the November 12 funeral of his assassinated cousin Jean-Hubert Feuillé, urged his followers to "go to the neighborhoods where there are big houses and heavy weapons" and help police disarm "the big men with heavy weapons."
Nov. 29—The US Coast Guard reports that it has intercepted at

sea and repatriated more than 1,000 Haitian refugees since November 15; this exceeds the total number of Haitian refugees intercepted during all of 1994.

IRAQ

Nov. 30—The UN Food and Agriculture Organization reports that UN economic sanctions imposed during the Persian Gulf War have contributed to the deaths of 576,000 Iraqi children since 1991 because of cutbacks in food supplies and medical and health services.

ISRAEL

Nov. 4—Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated by Yigal Amir, a religious right-wing Israeli law student, as he leaves a peace rally in Tel Aviv. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres is named acting prime minister.

The Islamic fundamentalists group Hamas takes responsibility for 2 suicide bombings this week that killed 11 Israelis; it says the attacks were made in retaliation for the October 26 assassination of Islamic Holy War leader Fathi Shiqaqi.

Nov. 6—Authorities arrest Hagai Amir, Yigal Amir's brother, as an accomplice in the assassination.

Nov. 7—Acting Prime Minister Peres announces that elections for prime minister will be held as planned on November 26, 1996, and not earlier.

Nov. 9—*The New York Times* reports that 5 people are being held in the Rabin assassination, including Avishai Raviv, leader of the far-right group Eyal.

Nov. 15—Margalit Har-Sheffy, an Israeli student, is arrested in the Rabin assassination; Raviv is released from custody.

Nov. 21—The government grants citizenship to Jonathan Pollard, an American currently serving a life sentence in the US for spying for Israel.

JAPAN

Nov. 13—Takami Eto, director of the Management and Coordination Agency, resigns after an off-the-record October statement was released in which he stated that "Japan did some good" during its occupation of Korea at the beginning of this century.

KOREA, SOUTH

Nov. 4—More than 10,000 people stage a demonstration in Seoul demanding an investigation of President Kim Young Sam's involvement in a \$654-million slush fund that was under the control of former President Roh Tae Woo.

Nov. 16—Former President Roh is arrested for accepting hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes during his presidency.

Nov. 24—President Kim calls for the prosecution of the country's former military rulers for their role in the killing of several hundred students during the 1980 pro-democracy movement.

LEBANON

Nov. 1—In Israel's self-declared security zone in southern Lebanon, Muslim guerrillas kill 2 Israeli-backed militiamen and wound 5 Israeli soldiers in an attack that they say is in retaliation for the October 26 assassination of Islamic Holy War leader Fathi Shiqaqi.

Nov. 28—Party of God guerrillas in southern Lebanon fire rockets into northern Israel, striking settlements in Qiryat Shemona and western Galilee.

Nov. 29—Israel warplanes raid southern Lebanon for the 3d time in a week in another attack on Party of God outpost; 1 guerrilla is killed.

MEXICO

Nov. 29—The entire federal police department in Baja California Sur is transferred after its members are suspected of aiding narcotics traffickers in unloading \$100-million-worth of cocaine from a Colombian drug cartel-owned jet that landed in the state on November 5.

NIGERIA

Nov. 10—The government executes Ken Saro-Wiwa, an environmentalist who led the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, a group protesting environmental damage done by oil companies; 8 of Saro-Wiwa's colleagues are also hanged.

Nov. 16—Members of the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights claim that 9 of its members have been arrested for their plans to protest the execution of the 9 government critics last week.

PAKISTAN

Nov. 19—A suicide bomber kills 15 people and wounds 59 in an attack on the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad.

PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITY

Nov. 13—Israel turns over control of the West Bank town of Jenin to the National Authority.

Nov. 15—Palestinian police announce they have arrested 5 men from Libya and Algeria suspected of plotting to kill PLO chairman Yasir Arafat.

Nov. 19—The Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas announces that it will form a political party and participate in Palestinian elections planned for January 20, 1996.

POLAND

Nov. 19—President Lech Walesa loses today's presidential runoff to Aleksander Kwasniewski, a former Communist official who took 52% of the vote.

RUSSIA

Nov. 4—The Supreme Court overturns the Central Election Commission's disqualification of the liberal Yabloko Party from December 17 elections.

Nov. 23—Russian journalists, directed by Chechen rebel military leader Shamil Basayev, uncover a radioactive parcel in Izmailovsky Park in Moscow, where it had been buried by the rebels.

RWANDA

Nov. 29—A meeting of African leaders in Cairo announces an agreement, brokered by former US President Jimmy Carter, to provide for the safe repatriation of almost 2 million Tutsi refugees who had fled from Hutu violence last year.

SAUDI ARABIA

Nov. 13—A car bomb destroys an American-run military installation in Riyadh, killing 6 people, including 5 Americans; the Tigers of the Gulf and the Islamic Movement for Change take responsibility for the attack.

SOUTH AFRICA

Nov. 29—President Nelson Mandela names Nobel Peace Prize-winner Desmond Tutu to head the Truth Commission, a group that will investigate political crimes committed under apartheid.

SRI LANKA

Nov. 4—The army reports that 25,000 of its troops have surrounded the city of Jaffna, a stronghold of the guerrilla Liberation Tigers of Tamil; more than 100,000 people are fleeing the city.

Nov. 20—Government forces enter Jaffna; 5 soldiers and 100 rebels are reported killed.

Nov. 25—*The New York Times* reports that President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga has announced that she is ready to negotiate with the Tamil guerrillas in exchange for a partial surrender of their weapons.

UNITED KINGDOM

Northern Ireland

Nov. 3—Talks between the British government and the Irish Republican Army break off today because of disarmament disagreements, including an IRA demand that the British withdraw the 18,000 troops stationed in Northern Ireland in exchange for IRA disarmament.

Nov. 28—Prime Minister John Major and Irish Prime Minister John Bruton announce that by the end of February, full-scale negotiations between all parties in Northern Ireland will begin;

the issue of IRA disarmament will be handled by a 3-member international commission.

Nov. 30—US President Bill Clinton arrives in Belfast; he is the 1st US president to visit Northern Ireland.

UNITED STATES

Nov. 19—The US announces it will hold up \$4.5 million in aid to Haiti because the country has not made progress in privatizing state enterprises and reforming the civil service.

Nov. 14—The government furloughs more than 800,000 federal employees; Congress and President Bill Clinton have failed to agree on a temporary resolution to fund the government through the rest of the year; such a resolution is needed because Congress has only passed 3 of 13 annual appropriations bills.

Nov. 15—Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin announces he has tapped 2 civil service retirement funds for \$61.3 billion in order to pay interest on the national debt and finance minimal government operations through late December.

Nov. 17—The House, voting 237 to 189, and the Senate, voting 52 to 47, pass a Republican-backed temporary spending bill to allow federal employees to return to work; Clinton promises to veto the legislation. ■

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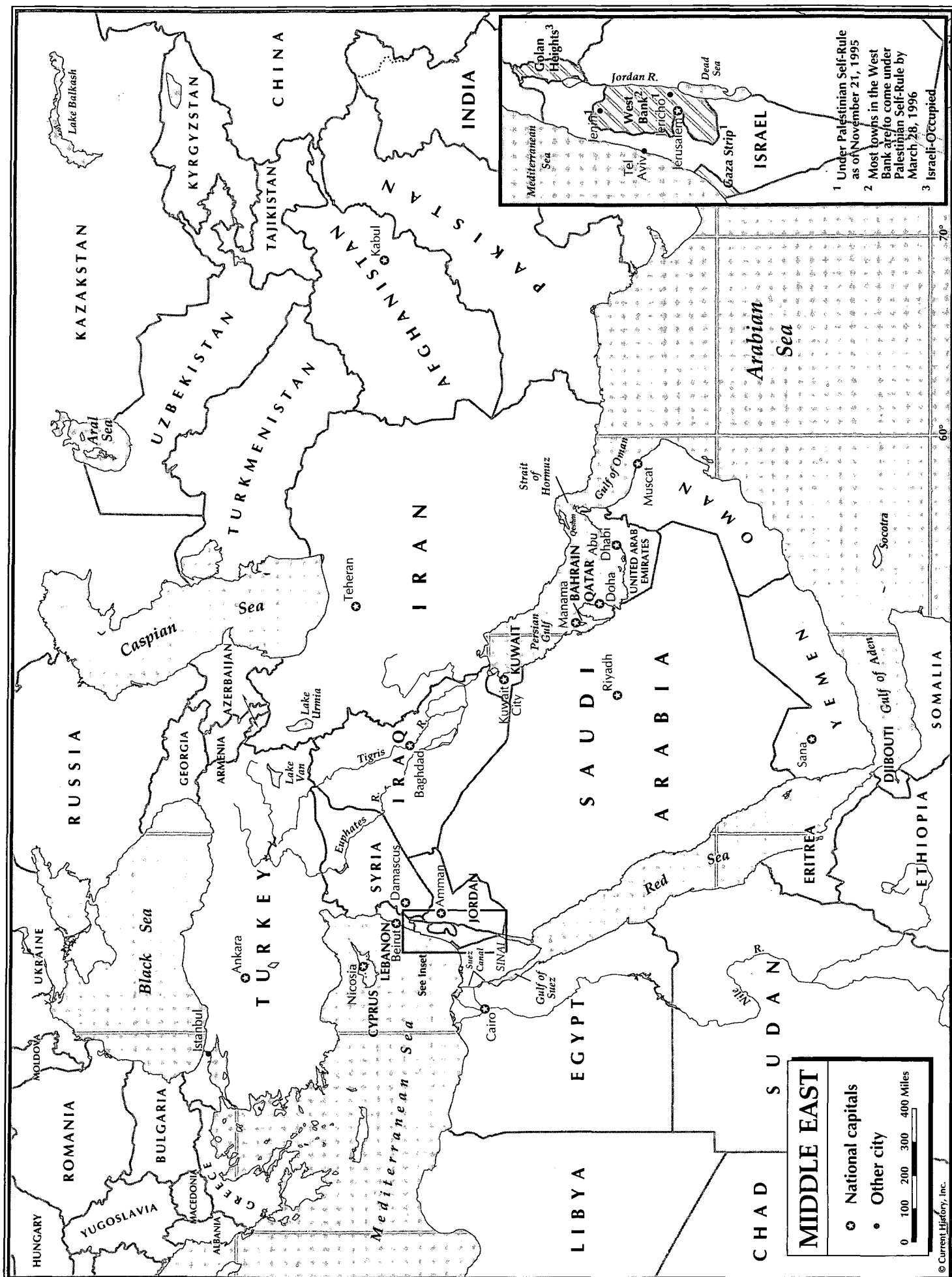


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